

THE SOUTH IN PROGRESS

A full-length portrait
of the South—its eco-
nomic, political, social
and cultural aspects

Katharine DuPre Lumpkin

\$2.00

THE SOUTH IN PROGRESS

This is a full-length portrait of the South in its economic, political, social and cultural aspects.

Set in the background of the economic and historical development of the South, the author deals in great detail with conditions in the decade just ended. No major subject touching the social economy of the South and the problems of Southern people is neglected — the emergence of liberal thought, the Southern working class and the struggle for unionization, education and why it has been backward, the crusade for civil rights, widespread discrimination against the Negro, the condition of share-croppers and their effort to change their lot, the New Deal, the TVA and the AAA, cotton and tobacco culture in the development of Southern economy, the consequences to Southern welfare of absentee control of Southern industry and resources.

(continued on back flap)

THE SOUTH IN PROGRESS

(continued from front flap)

The author, a Ph.D. in Sociology from the University of Wisconsin and one-time fellow of the Social Science Research Council, is author of **THE FAMILY: A STUDY OF MEMBER ROLES**, and **SHUTDOWNS IN THE CONNECTICUT VALLEY**, a monograph in the Smith College Studies in History. She is co-author of **CHILD WORKERS IN AMERICA**, a study generally recognized as definitive in its field.

Dr. Lumpkin is a Southern woman who knows her material at first hand. Hers is an objective work of social science based upon extensive research. It is a work of insight and experience as well. Here is the first adequate treatment of America's "number one economic problem."

THE SOUTH IN PROGRESS

By KATHARINE DUPRE LUMPKIN

CO-AUTHOR OF "CHILD WORKERS IN AMERICA"



NEW YORK

INTERNATIONAL PUBLISHERS

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PRINTED IN THE U. S. A.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I wish to thank the Labor Research Association for its generous assistance. Its help in gathering data, especially on current newspaper and periodical material, has been invaluable.

Many persons, too numerous to thank by name, have aided me with material and suggestions. I hope they will accept this general expression of my appreciation.

In the course of the book I more than once pay tribute to the scholarly research carried on in recent years by southern social scientists. We are very fortunate to live in a time when such excellent studies of the South are being made.

K. D. L.

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THE SOUTH IN PROGRESS

AUTHOR'S FOREWORD

Southerners who try to know the South as it is have no small task on their hands. The old fund of knowledge to which many of us fell heir as children is very different from the new stock accumulated in more recent years from the researches of scholars and from the experience of men. We must re-examine and reconstruct our ideas on southern history and problems, never an easy thing to do. Some have to do more recasting than others, depending upon the generation to which they belong and the particular tenor of the teaching they have received. But it would be surprising if there were any of us who did not need to do a somewhat thorough overhauling.

Many never undertake the task of course. They are what we may term for lack of a better phrase traditional Southerners. It is the traditional Southerner that most Northerners * think of when one mentions the South.

Not that we cannot understand the persistence of traditional southern views. It was only a few decades ago that our people had their backs against the wall and felt the world was against them. Little wonder, I think, that they became very dogmatic, and no doubt defensive too, in passing on to us their views of life and society, their concepts of the cause and effect of southern conditions, their racial theories, and all other ideas that go to make up the intellectual and emotional heritage of the general run of southern white children. The heritage of the

* Northerner is used here in the broad, old-fashioned sense common in the South, to mean all in the country who are not Southerners.

southern Negro child is of course something else again which we should bear in mind as we go along.

But it is not alone Southerners who have a special set of stereotyped notions about the South. Northerners have too, and needless to say they do not conform to the southern stereotypes in many important particulars. When we place one over against the other it would be hard to realise that in both cases we are seeing a picture of the South. Nor are Northerners under the same compulsion as Southerners to revise their views. They do not live under southern conditions, and are less apt to be forced by circumstances to go after the truth. Here it should be obvious I am thinking of the socially minded Northerner and Southerner, not the traditional type.

It has been brought home to me time and again, the barrier it is to joint effort for forward-looking groups, North and South, to look at southern questions from such different standpoints.

When the Labor Research Association asked me to undertake a book on southern problems this situation occurred to me. As a social economist and a Southerner, I have been a deeply interested student of the South for many years. I saw this as an opportunity if I could help enlarge the area of common understanding.

One could hardly ask a more vital period of which to write than the one through which we have been passing. In the decade of the 1930's southern problems came to the forefront of national attention. Labour and political changes brought a tendency to deal with them on a national scale. But they also brought us squarely up against those who think things should remain very much as they are. This small but influential group would have us deal with these staggering southern questions in the old ways. We shall see that considerations of human welfare rule that out. But may we hope for something different?

The discussion of this question belongs later in these pages, but let me anticipate it by this much. Do people still largely think of the South as a solid, homogeneous entity? I think they

do. For example, I think they tend to accept the almost solid bloc of southern votes that we have had in Congress on political measures as an authentic picture of the South. This is natural enough, but it is very mistaken. As in the rest of the country, there is a sharp conflict of interests in the South. Internally the section is anything but at one. Just as our problems have intensified in recent years, so has the conflict. The issues around which it goes on, all stem from attempts of southern labour and liberal groups to deal with southern problems in humanitarian ways.

Of course the divisions in the South correspond to the divisions north of Mason and Dixon's line. They are similar in origin and kind. Potentially, therefore, a common basis of action should exist between like-minded groups in the different sections of the country. As I shall show, those who are not in favour of popularly-supported changes in the South have come to recognise their common bonds. It is much less true of the other side. Labour and other progressive groups in the North need to see how closely their own welfare is tied into the solution of southern problems. Similar groups in the South must more than ever seek a nationwide, as well as a Southwide approach to them. The old sectional barriers still tend to stand in the way of common activity for the common good. We greatly need a new alignment of labour and liberal groups cutting across these barriers. This must happen sooner or later if much progress is to be made.

This appraisal of the South in progress makes no attempt to be comprehensive. It goes back to the past only as the past throws necessary light on certain acute present problems, and then there is time to touch it only lightly. I am mindful of how greatly we need to study our history. Southern problems cannot be understood fully except in the light of an extensive examination of our historical background, as this is illuminated by the continuing contributions of research scholars. But in a short study what one can do is limited, and here I am dealing

primarily with the present day. The book treats those subjects and stresses those facts that bear most directly upon the issues with which we must deal in the years immediately to come.

Of course not all progressive-minded Southerners are of one mind in their interpretation of southern problems, their background and solution. That is to be taken for granted. No writer would claim to represent some non-existent "typical" view. But the areas of agreement are very large. Documented facts can be seen for what they are. And the interpretation each of us gives may be judged upon its merits.

In closing this foreword I can only mention the fact that since completion of my final chapters war has broken out in Europe. It is not possible here to weigh the consequences this disaster may have in complicating southern problems. That it will do so is inevitable. It becomes more imperative than ever that the domestic reforms instituted under the New Deal should remain and be extended as a bulwark for the preservation of labour welfare and democracy itself. Each and every successful assault upon them in this period, crucial in any case for popular welfare, we can know without hesitation would do incalculable harm.

CHAPTER I. LAND OF COTTON

More than one-half of all America's farms are located south of Mason and Dixon's line. A fourth of the South's income, as compared with one-eighth for the nation, comes from agriculture.¹ That is not because the area is ill-equipped for manufactures. The South is rich in natural resources, in coal, oil, iron and other minerals, with plentiful sources of water power. In recent years there has been a marked spread in southern industries, yet Dixie's cotton plantations continue to dominate the southern landscape, stretching in a wide arc from North Carolina down through the southern Atlantic and Gulf States, into Arkansas, Oklahoma and Texas, and embracing portions of Tennessee and Kentucky. If we are to understand the South we must keep at the forefront of our minds the determining rôle of agriculture.

Before the war of the sixties when southern planters worked their fields with slave labour, there were few mills in southern states. When the invention of the cotton gin eliminated the slow hand labour required to separate fibre from seed, the rapidly growing textile factories in the North and the mills abroad, ravenous in their appetites for cotton, made cotton culture highly profitable to the southern planter. So much so, that it spread and fastened itself upon every piece of land that gave promise of a yield.

The beauty of cotton was its nature as a cash crop. It was demanded not only by the expanding textile industry of New England and the Central States but by the older centres of Great Britain. To the small southern upper and middle classes

in the favoured position of planter or merchant, this cash income from cotton would purchase the manufactured goods Britain and the northern states alone were able to supply. As for the upkeep of slaves, the planter had but to buy back cotton in the form of a little cheap yard goods for clothing, and to raise corn and hogs and cane for meal, meat and molasses for their food. Slave labour was indeed "cheap"—the first cheap labour of the South, and a prelude to the conditions which have kept southern labour, both white and coloured, "cheap" to this day.

The war freed the slaves, but the plantation and cotton culture remained. Planters put their former slaves back to work raising and picking cotton, this time as sharecroppers. Slave labour was replaced by sharecropping as the dominant employer-labour relationship. Assured of a cheap and sure labour supply, the planters kept the plantation system and continued to specialise in cotton, the great cash crop.

Before the sixties there were poor non-slaveholding white farmers who raised some cotton. There were still others farming on the poorest lands where they had been gradually pushed by the spread of plantations, able to do little more than scratch from the soil the means of subsistence. These were men who looked upon the planter and slavery as enemies. Located in poor country neighbouring on the rich cotton belt, or up in foothill and mountain sections, the areas dominated by these men were the seat of pro-union anti-slavery sentiment in the Civil War. Even to-day their inhabitants are dogged antagonists of the Bourbon South.

After the war and the transition to sharecropping, many of the poorer independent white cotton farmers were drawn onto the plantations as tenants. Only a few improved their status and developed good-sized farms of their own. From the white tenant farm families and the subsistence homesteads in the hills, the textile factories later on recruited mill workers, promising them a land of plenty if they moved onto a "mill hill."

The other principal crops of the South were similar to cotton

in being well adapted to the plantation. Even before cotton won the ascendancy, rice and sugar cane plantations had flourished, the one in South Carolina and Georgia and the other in Louisiana and Mississippi. As for Virginia, it has planted and exported tobacco from early colonial times. (To-day rice has changed its locus to parts of Oklahoma and Texas, and tobacco has spread to the Carolinas and Kentucky.) Corn has always been raised in large quantities all over the region, as feed for stock and food for man. But while all these crops have remained important, they have never been able to hold a candle to king cotton.

In late years the South has developed many specialised areas: Florida for citrus fruits, portions of the Piedmont area for other fruits and dairy products, the tidewater for peanuts, areas near the cities for truck gardening, and so on for many other products. But none of these has exercised any material influence on the course southern economy takes.

Cotton far transcends all other crops. While there are agricultural areas where no cotton is raised, the cotton belt overshadows them. While the agricultural population is far from being made up entirely of landlords and sharecroppers, the plantation system remains dominant. More than a half of all the region's crop land is used for cotton growing; more than two million of its farm families (nearly a third of all farm families in the United States) are on cotton farms.² Of the farmers operating cotton farms, the greater part are not owners but work on shares.³ To-day as for years past the South remains a single-crop, plantation economy.

From this plantation economy have flowed certain well-defined ills. It has made the South peculiarly sensitive to fluctuations in conditions on the world market. "No other similar area in the world gambles its welfare and the destinies of so many people on a single crop market year after year," said the National Emergency Council report on the South. Most of our cotton crop is sold in foreign markets. The annual crop ranges

from 12.5 to 17 million bales, and two-thirds of the crop is normally exported.⁴ In 1932-33 nearly 60% of the cotton consumed in the world was American-grown.

Of late years conditions in cotton have been bad. Cotton exports have fallen off, there has been increasing competition from other cotton regions of the world, less has been consumed at home, prices have been low. Cotton farmers who were getting 20¢ a pound for cotton in 1927 were getting only 6¢ in 1931 and 10¢ in 1933. Such extreme fluctuations make the raising of cotton the most hazardous of ventures.⁵ To the single crop South these conditions have brought very serious results.

If we consider along with cotton the second large crop, tobacco, the situation is little changed. As much as a billion and a half pounds of tobacco are produced annually in the United States, 85% of which is southern-grown. But it too is a cash crop and a large part—usually about one-third—is exported.⁶

From a purely agricultural standpoint, the South has suffered from its preoccupation with cotton culture under wasteful plantation methods. Experts have repeatedly pointed out how the soil is being worn out, and what terrible land-waste has gone on for years. Cotton, tobacco and corn, the Emergency Council's report on the South tells us, use up soil fertility very rapidly. It is just these crops that are planted year after year on southern farm lands. Every year we are losing through erosion fertile topsoil valued at over \$300 million.⁷ Great quantities of fertiliser are used. The region has only one-fifth of the agricultural income of the nation, but it spends two-thirds of the total fertiliser bill; on its one-sixth of the country's total crop lands harvested, it uses two-thirds of the total national tonnage of commercial fertiliser.⁸ But fertiliser, while it enriches, does not permanently restore the soil.

Largely because of its absorption in cash crops this superior agricultural region is seriously deficient in essential dietary products of meat, milk, vegetables and fruits.⁹ There is plenty for those who can buy; there is plenty for those on the farms

who are comfortably off and can raise their own. But there is far from enough to go around, even if to-morrow the millions of farm families were able to purchase the supplies necessary to a balanced diet.

But the major human ills in the last analysis go back to the plantation system under which cotton is raised. Able to persist after the war, by reason of the uneconomic method of sharecropping, it brings well-being only to the landlord, and only to him if he makes the lot of the sharecropper incredibly hard. Nor does its baleful influence stop there. We shall see later how the depressed condition of all agricultural labour in the South, especially Negro labour, flows from the plantation system, and how the lower wages of southern industrial workers in the end stem from the same cause.

Retarded Industrial Development

The South was slow to develop industrially. Slaveholders, the only class in the South with wealth to invest, were preoccupied with cotton culture. Not until after the upheaval of their economy brought on by the war, did manufactures begin to have much place. Even then little headway could be made until outside capital came in, for the section was prostrated economically by the war. Eventually some capital came from a new southern business class that emerged in the years after 1870, but most of it was secured in the North. As late as 1880 only one-tenth of the South's gainful workers were in manufacturing and mechanical industries, making but 5% of the nation's goods.¹⁰ The proportion of workers in manufactures has now increased to a fifth. But still we of the South carry on only about 12% of the country's manufacturing, while the northeastern states are responsible for 43% and the middle states for 35%.¹¹

Industry has now taken a place of large importance in southern economy, although its development is uneven, with special features that bear down hard on labour. Manufactures

are concentrated in sections of a few states, such as textiles in the Carolinas and steel in Alabama. Wage scales are at the bottom of the American ladder, with Negro labour receiving the lowest wages of all.

Factories in the South, like mills everywhere, have gravitated toward the sources of water power. Dixie has excellent water power facilities, especially in the Piedmont region. This strip of territory, extending from Virginia through the Carolinas and Georgia into Alabama, lies between the foothills of the Appalachian highlands and the coastal plain. Hundreds of rivers take their drop in this narrow area, their falls offering countless sites for factories. Tennessee and Kentucky, lying outside the Piedmont, also have good power facilities. They too have large manufactures, while Alabama with its rich deposits of coal and iron has developed around Birmingham a steel and mining area known proudly as the Pittsburgh of the South. Now that electrical energy can be carried by transmission lines for great distances, we may expect a gradual spread of industries to other centres. For a long while, however, southern industry will be rooted chiefly in the Piedmont and around a few large cities such as Birmingham.

Textile manufacture we know is the main industry of the South. When factories began to spring up in the cotton country, naturally most of them were mills to spin and weave the cotton fibre. Textiles were the logical field of manufacture for the rising southern business class to enter. Northern capital, looking for the largest possible margin on investments, was drawn to Dixie by the nearness to raw materials and especially the promise of an abundant and cheap labour supply. Later, unions in the North succeeded in raising wages there, and labour legislation made inroads on the long hours and regulated the conditions of work. Northern mills thereupon began to migrate South until to-day New England, once the heart of the textile industry, has been outdistanced by the South Atlantic States.

In 1909 New England had half again as many active cotton spindles as the South; in 1914 it still had a third more. But in 1927 the southern states were ahead of New England by over three million active spindles.¹² Lately the South has left New England completely behind. In 1935 it had much the largest share, over four-fifths, of all cotton manufacturing that went on in the United States. Its mills consumed 81% of the cotton used in this country; the products they put out in dollar value were 70% of the nation's cotton goods.¹³ Only in the production of quality cotton goods is New England still ahead, though even in that field the South is rapidly gaining.

As cotton mills spread, more and more families left the hills and fields to tend the spindles, drawn by the hope of improving their lot. To-day there are far more workers employed in cotton textiles than in any other industry. North Carolina is the leading textile state, employing in 1935 close to 100,000 workers; South Carolina had over 70,000, Georgia nearly as many, and Alabama about 32,000. These four states together produced cotton goods valued at \$654 million in 1935.¹⁴ Adding to cotton textiles the large knit-goods industry, including recently installed hosiery mills, and we have some 65,000 more workers, with products valued at an additional \$140 million.¹⁵

Typical also of the South is the manufacture of cigarettes and cigars. Tobacco factories are highly localised, with a few great corporations operating large plants chiefly in North Carolina, Virginia and Florida. North Carolina leads the nation in cigarette manufacture. The products of four of its companies in 1935 totaled \$378,874,000.¹⁶

Some of our principal southern industries are little known. Rural or semi-rural in character, requiring few skilled operatives, they are yet responsible for the well-being—or lack of it—of hundreds of thousands of southern people. The sum total of their products is valued at a very high figure. Some 225,000 wage-earners were employed in lumber and timber products in 1929 when production was high. Recently the output of this

industry was valued at \$229,474,000. Large revenues come from turpentine and rosin in Georgia and Florida. The production of cotton seed oil mills in 1937 was valued at \$211 million.¹⁷

Coal mining occupies a large place in the South. There were more than 100,000 miners in 1930, or about one-fifth of the country's force, working in the principal coal fields of Kentucky, Alabama, Tennessee and Virginia. The Kentucky and Alabama fields are the largest, with nearly 60,000 in the Blue Grass state and 25,000 in Birmingham and nearby areas. Virginia has about 12,000 coal miners.¹⁸ Many of the southern mines are "captive," the corporations, like United States Steel, that own them producing coal not for sale to the public but for use in their own vast manufacturing industries—steel, automobiles and aluminum.

The South has a long coastline and an active maritime trade. Nine of our thirteen southern states are on the seaboard and not one of them is without a port of some size, several having more than one: Norfolk in Virginia, Wilmington in North Carolina, Charleston in South Carolina, Savannah in Georgia, Tampa and Pensacola in Florida, Mobile in Alabama, Gulfport in Mississippi, New Orleans and Lake Charles in Louisiana, and Corpus Christi, Galveston, Texas City, Houston, Port Arthur, Beaumont and Orange in Texas. Coastal ships, oil tankers, deep sea vessels ply these ports. Maritime workers in southern ports in 1935 handled one-fourth of the nation's foreign trade.¹⁹

Industries such as cotton textiles, tobacco, cotton seed oil, timber products, coal mining, have figured in southern economic development for a good many years. Others are of recent origin and importance. They show how industry has been expanding.

Only a small part of the country's iron and steel comes from the South, to be sure, but such heavy industry as we have plays a big rôle. It is highly localised. The Birmingham area, its hills rich in iron ore and coal, its great stretches of blast furnaces and steel mills manned by some 16,000 of the South's 30,000 steel workers, has become the region's principal heavy industry

centre. Great northern corporations like United States Steel and Republic Steel own both the mills and the mines.²⁰

Petroleum in the Southwest has become a vast industry. One has but to drive through the oil fields of Texas to feel how it dominates the scene. Products of southern petroleum refineries in 1935 were valued at more than \$463 million.²¹

Chemicals began their rapid expansion under the impetus of World War demand. Chemical products, manufactured in peace-time for a thousand uses, in war time become the backbone of the nation's war machine. They are highly profitable at all times to the great industrialist-financiers like the du Ponts; in war time they are super-profitable. When the chemical industry turned to the South, one reason was the nearness to raw materials. What more could the industry ask than to have right at hand petroleum, cotton, pulp wood, mineral deposits, including phosphate rock and sulphur? Ten years ago 34% of the nation's chemical establishments and 29% of the wage-earners employed in chemical manufacture were in the South. The industry has grown rapidly since. Then 10% of the explosives produced were made in the South, now it is 25%; then it was 61% of the rayon, now it is 70%. Seventy per cent of the fertiliser is made down South, 100% of naval stores. Virginia is becoming a principal centre for chemical manufacture.²²

Furniture manufacture is increasingly important. North Carolina alone averages around 15,000 workers in furniture factories, and when trade was booming made goods valued at over \$482 million.²³ Paper making is one of the newest industries. A large-scale campaign to "sell" the South as ideal for furniture and paper manufacture has been under way for some time. Chambers of Commerce have pushed it; we see it in trade papers like the Baltimore *Manufacturers Record*. Southern chemists have been hard at work on certain woods plentiful in our forests, to make them utilisable for paper manufacture. Lately their researches have been celebrated as successful. We hear of a four million dollar plant of the Union Bag & Paper

Corp. lately constructed at Savannah, Georgia, and of two very large pulp and kraft plants in Florida; of new processes that promise to make possible the use of southern pines of a fast-growing variety for newsprint and white paper. Forty-five million dollars worth of paper came from southern mills in 1935. More than \$100 million was invested in mills making use of pine wood to make paper and pulp between 1936 and 1938.²⁴

For industries that are expanding, like the chemical industry, it has been a simple matter to establish new units below the Mason and Dixon line. Others like hosiery concerns have chosen to pick up and move bodily, apparently finding it a paying proposition to go to the expense of re-establishing themselves in a new location and training in new operatives. Great paper mills with a sharp eye to costs have found it worth while to migrate South.

The same factors that drew textiles South until Dixie became the leader in textile manufacture, are proving the magnet for these new industries. Nearness to raw materials is one. But above all has been the promise of abundant, "cheap" and unprotected labour. Intermittent crises and curtailed markets, the general downward trend of the rate of profit—these conditions have made the owners of American industry scan production costs as never before. Wages they see as a major element in cost and the most vulnerable one. If other factors of southern location are equally favourable, why not locate in this region of low wages where in the past unions have been few and often weak? Industries have come South principally because they were seeking what southern business organisations have advertised as cheap and contented labour.

Southerners in plenty reject this description, and even more the eager greed with which outside capital has taken advantage of the extreme need and backwardness of our rural people. At the same time they know that the spread of industries brings progress in its wake. With it come the growth of cities and a

larger working class. Poor and restricted as life is on a southern mill hill, dangerous and impoverished as existence is for Harlan miners or Alabama steel workers, yet their life marks potentially a tremendous advance for the mass of southern people over their isolated and thwarted existence back in the hills or working a plot of submarginal land. In the factory towns are schools and new ideas and a whole new way of life. Out of these new associations individualistic farming folk began to learn the lesson of acting together. By joining with his fellows working next to him in the mine or mill a man saw that he could command a more equitable part of the fruits of his labour and achieve a new self-respect.

But that leaven works slowly. Meantime the burden of "cheapness" was fastened on the South, setting going a vicious circle that we are still treading at the present time.

Absentee Control

When industrial development finally did overtake the South, it was under conditions of absentee ownership. It is not too much to say that the giant financial houses and corporations of the North control most of the South's economic life. Outside investments in southern resources, manufactures and utilities have been huge. Large northern banking interests control the credit structure, and hence indirectly the whole cotton economy that produces on credit. One of the outstanding contributions of the report of the National Emergency Council on the economic condition of the South was to show the nation the extent and implications of this absentee control.²⁵

The region's vast coal resources are held by the nation's financial titans—Morgans, Mellons, Fords, Rockefellers. The Tennessee Coal, Iron and Railroad Co. ("T. C. & I."), dominant corporation in the Alabama fields, is a subsidiary of the United States Steel Corp., in which the Morgan bankers are leading figures. The Peabody Coal Co. (once part of the Insull

group) long ago acquired controlling interests in mines in eastern Kentucky. The Pittsburgh Coal Co. and the holding company known as the Koppers Co., are Mellon family firms. These companies secured several coal mining companies in Kentucky, while Mellon interests are also linked with the Norfolk and Western R.R., which in turn owns large coal properties. The Rockefeller interests have mines in Kentucky and Virginia.²⁶ Consolidation Coal Co. is a Rockefeller concern. Henry Ford also has mining properties in the Kentucky fields, acquired in the post-war period. Morgan-dominated concerns are not only in Alabama, but also in Harlan and Letcher counties in Kentucky.

The International Harvester Co. acquired many thousands of acres of land in Harlan County years ago; and United States Steel Corp., through a subsidiary, the United States Coal and Coke Co., during the World War bought lands adjacent to the International Harvester's properties. Anna Rochester, a leading authority in this field, says that in 1930 one-tenth of United States Steel Corp.'s coal came from its Harlan County mines, and one-fifth of the coal mined by Harlan miners came from the mines of United States Steel.²⁷

Southern steel is northern-controlled, much as is southern coal, with United States Steel Corp., largest single producer in America, dominating the principal steel centre of Birmingham. Republic Steel has lately entered Alabama at Birmingham and Gadsden.

Some of America's most conspicuous fortunes, notably the Rockefellers', have come from oil. Two-thirds of the country's petroleum energy is supplied by the southern states, and we have by far the largest share of the nation's known oil reserves.²⁸ Not one of the 16 great oil companies listed by Rochester as among the 200 largest non-banking corporations in America but has immense holdings in the South.* Standard

* The largest of these companies are: Standard Oil Co. of New Jersey; Socony-Vacuum Oil Co.; Standard Oil Co. of Indiana; Standard Oil Co.

Oil of New Jersey, for example, a billion-dollar Rockefeller concern, controls subsidiary corporations in Texas, Oklahoma, Louisiana and other southern states, all integrated in one giant network of refineries, pipe lines, natural gas, shipping companies, deepwater and river terminals, retail marketing depots—this huge financial control reaches into every quarter of the South. Rockefeller is but one power. Some oil is Mellon-owned, through the Gulf Oil Corp., for example; some a combination of great interests, as in the Texas Corp. Morgan shares in more than one concern.⁷⁹ The empire of these corporations is vast, their power reaches throughout the nation.

Tobacco manufacture has for years been under the control of huge corporations. Up to 1911 a single trust, the American Tobacco Co., monopolised the field. After its dissolution by the Supreme Court several great concerns emerged, four of them so large that they are among America's 200 largest non-banking corporations.⁸⁰

Leading railroads and other public utilities long ago passed over into the hands of northern capital. The Southern R.R., Florida & East Coast, Atlantic Coast Line (with the Louisville & Nashville) are all more or less directly linked with the Morgan interests.⁸¹ The Emergency Council's report to the President on *Economic Conditions of the South* says, "All the major railroad systems are owned and controlled elsewhere." It goes on, "Most of the great electric holding company systems, whose operating companies furnish the light, heat and power for Southern homes and industries, are directed, managed and owned by outside interests. Likewise, the transmission and distribution of natural gas, one of the South's greatest assets, is

of California; Texas Corp.; Gulf Oil Corp.; Shell Union Oil Corp.; and Consolidated Oil Corp. The assets of these companies range from \$376 million in the case of Consolidated Oil Corp., to over a billion for Standard Oil Co. of New Jersey and Socony-Vacuum. Together they have many subsidiaries in the South. (See Poor's *Industrial Volume*, 1937.)

almost completely in the hands of remote financial institutions." The billion-dollar Commonwealth and Southern Corp., best known for its opposition to TVA, is closely linked by cross-directorship to the inner group of the House of Morgan.³²

All of the electric and gas operating companies in Alabama, Georgia, Florida, which are subsidiaries of registered holding companies, have their general headquarters in New York, New Jersey, or Newark, N. J. This was the conclusion of a special report of the Securities and Exchange Commission's public utilities division in December, 1939.

Resources other than coal, oil and gas are also outside-owned. "For mining its mineral wealth and shipping it away in a raw or semi-finished form the South frequently receives nothing but the low wages of unskilled and semi-skilled labour." The report on *Economic Conditions of the South* goes on to show the extent of this absentee control. We have rich deposits of bauxite from which aluminum is made. We have large deposits of zinc ore. Texas and Louisiana produce 99% of the sulphur output of the nation. North Carolina and Tennessee are responsible for 36% of the ground feldspar produced. From Georgia comes 66% of the kaolin and from South Carolina 20%. Kentucky takes first rank in fluorspar. All of these important resources are owned and controlled by outside financial interests.

Then there is the textile industry. Decentralised though it still remains, a goodly portion of even this field of manufacture, which for a time was so distinctly the outgrowth of southern enterprise, has passed into northern hands.³³ This is especially true of the largest mills. One recent estimate states that about 15% of the cotton spindles and 13% of the looms within the States of North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia and Alabama are northern-owned.

The deeper south one goes, the larger is the percentage of northern ownership, because "Northern mills are going farther

into the South to enjoy its cheaper labour and longer working hours." In Alabama 36% of the spindles are northern-owned, and 37% of the looms. Northern ownership is even more pronounced in southern hosiery and silk manufacture.⁸⁴ Actual ownership, however, is by no means a measure of the extent of northern domination. Even the part of the textile industry owned by southern capital is dependent for its financing upon credit institutions which in turn are closely related to northern financial centres.

Not even the plantation system can claim real independence from northern financial domination. To trace this dependence we should have to follow a devious course, linking southern and northern banking and marketing institutions. It comes down to the fact that plantation production is able to survive only because of the credit structure supporting it. This credit comes to the planter first by way of the credit merchant and the country bank.⁸⁵ These in turn base their operations on the credit given by larger commercial banking houses, and so the chain of connexion is forged. Where large acreages have been taken over by insurance companies and big banks as a result of foreclosures, the relation is more direct.

How much of southern economy is northern-controlled? We cannot say precisely.⁸⁶ It could be much less than it is, and still northern financial circles would have a determining influence over southern life. As it is, they dominate all the largest and most strategically placed points of southern economy. It is not necessary for more than a part to come into the hands of outside capital, so long as that part embraces key resources, key industries, key avenues of trade and credit. By that means the major share of profits is drained off, and the entire economic structure of the region is made to serve what in common parlance is called "Wall Street." The effect is to keep the South poor, and to put the people at the mercy of an impersonal outside economic power.

Absentee control is not of course the whole story. The im-

mediate direction of southern economy is largely in the hands of southern men. It is they who carry on our southern affairs. Northern capital is content to leave the routine direction of southern affairs pretty much to the southern business class, knowing how potent its financial control is, whenever the occasion arises to exert it.

CHAPTER II. FRUITS OF THE SHARECROPPING SYSTEM

When a sharecropper gets his plot of land, he gets his cabin with it. Moreover, he is "furnished," which means that the landlord determines what food he shall eat and how much. The tools he works with, the amount of fertiliser he uses, the mule he is allowed for ploughing, these too the landlord determines. Of course the length of his working day is set by the landlord: the plantation bell rings in the early morning for croppers as well as labourers—just as it used to ring in the old slave days—and it rings again at dusk when they are allowed to go home. Work is "from can see to can't see," as the saying goes down South.¹

Nor is it just the cropper who labours. The major southern crops are raised under the family system. Only a tenant with a wife and several children is really wanted, and all, from the age of six or seven years up, are expected to go to the fields. Naturally the smallest children cannot plough and hoe, but there are long seasons, especially in cotton and tobacco, when their little hands must keep busy and their small backs bend throughout the long southern day. Gardner Jackson, formerly of the AAA, once said of sharecroppers, "They live on the borderline of starvation,"² and we cannot escape his conclusion when we know starvation may be a cumulative thing, bred through years of severe undernourishment on food that is wretched in kind and amount.

I begin with life as the sharecropper knows it, not so much because his condition strikes rock bottom, for agricultural wage

workers in the deep South are commonly in an even worse state; but as the more thoughtful southern writers have begun to point out, in the plantation-sharecropper system lies a root cause of the economic ills that beset the region. If we would know why exploitation can be carried to such lengths, we must turn to sharecropping. In doing so I am well aware that here is one of the areas where objective fact and our traditional southern teaching do not always jibe.

Whence Sharecropping

In the long run sharecropping stems from antebellum days when the southern plantation rested on slave labour. It raises the ghost of that ugliest of all episodes in western civilisation, the enslavement of African tribesmen by white traders bent upon the money they could make in Europe and America from white purchasers who found profitable the labour of slaves. African slaves were purchased and held in all the American colonies. It was only as time passed that the institution became concentrated in one section, the South. It was not until the northern upper classes found they had little use for slave labour that they joined in the movement of indignation against slavery. Slavery would undoubtedly have prevailed in northern agriculture if the crops there had been adapted to slave labour. It became established in the South because slave labour could be used so profitably on the rice, cotton and tobacco plantations. Once established, of course, it became a settled institution to the slaveholders and they clung to what they regarded as their property and the source of their wealth. Inequitable economic institutions have a way of corrupting human nature, so that those who profit by the inequalities are found defending indefensible systems, and opposing what on humanitarian grounds should never have been tolerated.*

* Thus we find the first New England cotton mill owners of the early 19th century hiring little children aged six and up to work in factories

When the war brought slavery to an end, the southern plantation system found itself in a very difficult position. Heretofore it had depended entirely upon Negro slave labour, and now Negroes were supposedly free.

To be honest, we must admit that none had benefited economically from the old plantation system save the upper classes. It had worked great hardship on the small farm owner and landless whites, the Negro it had subjected to chattel slavery, and industry had been kept backward.

From our vantage point of to-day, we can see that break-up of the plantation system followed by large-scale land reform, would have been beneficial alike to the small white farmers, the so-called "poor whites"—meaning the mass of poorer white people whose condition had been miserable due to living in a slave economy—and to the newly freed black peasant. Land reform was the implied promise in the slogan, "forty acres and a mule," that as white children in the South we were taught to look back upon with mixed feelings of ridicule and fear.

From recent studies we have learned that the Negro people regarded that slogan as a promise of land and implements for beginning life on their own small farms—a sort of hostage to guarantee their freedom. The landless whites were also stirred by hopes for a better chance at the land. There were some northern reformers who had a vague agricultural reform program in view, and there were Negro organisations—though we do not hear much about their existence in our older southern sources—seeking a solution to this problem.⁸ But none of these ever got far. It was the conservative forces up North that in the end triumphed, the industrial interests which all along were concerned about one main thing: how to open up the section to northern exploitation of natural and human resources. Thus 12 hours a day. While state laws were gradually won forbidding that practise, they were won only against the bitter opposition of the mill owners. Child labour still remains to-day, North and South, in those production fields where it is considered profitable, because employing interests have successfully opposed legislative reforms.

engrossed, the land question did not particularly enter into their calculations. It was left to take care of itself. In the end that meant it was taken care of by the old planter class. A few years after the war the plantation system was going again in full swing.

In the devastated condition of the South's economy after the Civil War, it was largely a question of setting going once more the section's productive machine, of getting money and credit (mostly credit) to buy seeds and hire labour and provide food for labour while it produced; of getting trade and transportation onto a going basis again; of running the government. Whoever could do these things would be able to dominate the South and arrange economic matters in their own way. It was a strategic moment. If the federal government had seen fit to step in and help establish democratic land reforms in the South, the plantation system could have been broken up and the South would have been immeasurably better off. Lacking this, the men who had always been in positions of economic and political power, the southern landlords and their associates in the towns—what is sometimes called the Bourbon class,—took control. They could command credit, and they had experience.

Soon there grew up a new class of merchants and other business men, able to furnish credit and to muster the financial resources necessary. These became the new "Bourbons."* While old and new Bourbons vied with each other for the most favoured position in succeeding years, their methods were in substantial agreement, based as they were upon the extensive exploitation of the human and material resources of the South. These were the groups that took hold. First they shook off northern political domination which had continued throughout the Reconstruction period; then they proceeded to "solve"

* Professor Van A. Woodward in his study of *Tom Watson*, published in 1938, terms this new business class the "New Departure" group (Chapter IV). His discussion illuminates the entire period immensely. I hold no brief for the term "Bourbon." If I employ it occasionally it is only because it is a familiar designation.

their economic problems in their own way, including the use of such extra-legal methods as the old Ku Klux Klan.

The economic solution they found was an old one, although possibly they were not aware of that. It had been used in other countries where landlords faced much the same problem. Whenever slave or feudal régimes have been broken up, the landlords have invariably tried to devise a means of getting cheap agricultural labour under conditions as nearly like the old, subject labour as possible. Some measure of political as well as economic coercion has always been attempted, because working and living conditions at such times usually have been too bad for free men voluntarily to endure.

Bound Again to the Soil

Money was scarce in the South after the Civil War, and in any case landlords did not approve of paying cash wages. They deeply resented attempts to make them do so by the "damn Yankees" in the Freedmen's Bureau. Planters insisted that their former slaves would be ruined by cash in hand: that the moment they earned a little something, they would stop work and go off and spend what they had made.* With our perspective we can see how unreliable is this landlord reasoning, for it arose from a deeply rooted resistance to the change from the old master-slave relation. As a matter of fact even the landlords themselves recognised that workers paid in wages were more independent than those farming on shares. It is apparent to the practical man as well as to the economic historian that

* These ideas can still be found. According to Arthur F. Raper, in his recent admirable study of plantation life, the "typical landlord" says that his typical tenant or wage hand "will work when he has to—when he is hungry or about to get hungry." "The man who works for food not only works regularly," explains the planter, "he works gladly; he takes orders cheerfully, is seldom sullen—all in all, he's the most satisfactory farm laborer." (Raper, Arthur, *Preface to Peasantry*, 1936, pp. 158-159.)

wage-labour marks a great advance for the worker over slave labour, and also over the serf-labour of feudal times. It is feudal, serf-labour that the sharecropping system most closely resembles.

It is now clear to us that what would satisfy southern planters, given what they were accustomed to, was some method of hiring labour that would once again, in some measure at least, hold their former slaves to the land, and thus assure them a cheap and sure labour supply at a low subsistence price.* Sharecropping provided this. Under it the planter still owned the land and all the tools and work animals. He owned the cropper's cabin and even furnished the food on which the cropper's family existed. He furnished seed and fertiliser. He did all this "on credit," in the form of advances to the tenant.

Food was doled out to the cropper from the plantation store, or from some trader's store at which the planter carried an account for the corn meal, molasses and poor grades of meat customarily allowed. The amount of food the sharecropper was permitted to have was strictly regulated by the landlord. It was usual for the landlord to tell the cropper what to plant and when to plant it, and when to work on it and how to work on it; he himself or his overseers supervised the work.

The net effect of all this was to keep the sharecropper and his family completely dependent upon the landlord for everything. When the cotton was picked and ginned, and the corn harvested, the landlord usually got one-half of the crop, his share for permitting the cropper to work the land and live in the cabin and use the tools and work animals. The other half was supposed to be the cropper's, the cash from it his "earnings" for the year. But the landlord sold the cropper's cotton, and

* "Their [the former slaves] potential instability made them an unreliable supply of labour unless means were found to attach them to the land.... The social status of Negro croppers was only once removed from their former status as slaves." (*Farm Tenancy*, Report of the President's Committee, Feb., 1937, p. 43.)

before he turned over to him the proceeds from the croppers' half, the landlord deducted from it an amount to cover all that had been advanced in food, fertiliser, seed, and so on, adding very heavy interest charges for everything loaned. If any were left after that, it was what the cropper received in cash.

After many years of the sharecropping system we have learned that little if anything is left. When the crop is in, the sharecropper may even discover that according to the landlord's accounting he is still in debt to him. This debt the landlord charges against his tenant's next year's account.

The essence of this system is its vicious credit-debit circle, and the crop lien laws that support it. These were fostered by the acute post-war economic situation. Southern legislatures after the Reconstruction period began to enact laws giving the landlord a prior claim on the crop of his sharecropper to the amount of advances made on credit to the cropper in food, seed, fertiliser and other supplies. Losses on advances were further insured by the practice of charging croppers exorbitantly high credit prices. Sometimes as much as 50% is added to the prices charged them for their supplies.⁴

Since the sharecropper must depend for his very food upon the credit extended to him by the plantation store or the store designated by the planter, he has no choice but to pay the prices he is charged. Often he knows very little about these prices, except that they are high. The accounts are kept at the store, and when the crop comes in the cropper does not see his "share" of it until the amount of the advances to him have been deducted. Even if all planters and all merchants were honest and well-intentioned men—and we know that cannot be true—extreme exploitation would be inevitable under such a vicious credit system.⁵

I do not mean to suggest that landlords themselves never suffer any losses. Of course they do, as do manufacturers, from economic crises and competition. But crop lien laws and the

custom of exorbitant credit prices furnished some security against loss on advances, at the same time providing a cheap family labour supply—as cheap as could be got. More and more plantation land was parcelled out to tenants in shares, and the number of tenants working on shares grew very rapidly.

A finishing touch was put on the plantation system with the passage of so-called false-pretence and other similar laws. Here again there was clamped down upon us the dead hand of a tragic past.

These laws were also drawn after Reconstruction. The wages or “furnish” the landlords offered would not in themselves hold labour, for they were so miserably bad that men working shares were driven to seek something better for their families. But if families could pick up and leave at peak seasons just as cotton chopping or cotton picking time came, because, labour being greatly in demand, some neighbouring landlord offered better terms, then certainly the cost of labour would go up.

Such freedom of movement for labouring people would in the end have improved agricultural labour's conditions, but it would also have increased the cost of production to the landlord. Apparently it was finally agreed that something must be done. Laws were devised in a number of states which sought to prevent the labourer or tenant under written or even verbal contract from leaving his work against the landlord's wishes. There were laws that made it “a criminal offence for a labourer or tenant to accept ‘advances’ as part of a contract and then fail—for any reason—to perform that contract to the employer's satisfaction.”⁶ If labourers did try to jump these “contracts,” we can take the word of a southern planter of some 20 or 30 years ago on how the law was sometimes used. “You arrest him (the labourer) on the criminal charge of false pretences, which is equivalent to a charge of stealing . . . money; you get him convicted; he is fined, and in lieu of money to pay the fine he goes to jail; then you pay the fine and costs and the judge

assigns him to you to work out the fine, and you have him back on your plantation, backed up by the authority of the state."⁷

Tenants who fall into debt for "advances" may find themselves in a very precarious situation due to these laws. The number in debt is large. In six counties in one state, for example, 43.4% of the tenants were already in debt to their landlords when the 1934 cotton crop was planted; in another county 26% were in debt.⁸ By iron-clad custom the tenant may not dispute the landlord's books. (If he is a Negro tenant he would be considered "uppity" or worse to do so.) If the landlord chooses to try to hold his tenant who is in debt, in most states the laws provide ways for him to do so.

As the years passed some of the statutes attempting thus to bind labourers and tenants to their employment were held unconstitutional by the courts. But others were thereupon substituted, and in several states still operate. So long as these customs and laws can be invoked it is virtually impossible to avoid many instances of what borders on actual peonage.

Peonage, says a Supreme Court decision, is "a status or condition of compulsory service based upon the indebtedness of the peon to the master."⁹ How many southern labourers find themselves thus bound we do not know. Some 18 or 20 years ago a United States Attorney General found the condition to exist "to a shocking extent in Georgia, Alabama and some parts of Texas."¹⁰ Lately no general investigations into peonage have been made. Plainly, however, the conditions breeding peonage still remain. Witness a famous recent case occurring in 1936 when one Peacher, a planter and deputy sheriff in Arkansas, arrested a number of Negro strikers, members of the Southern Tenant Farmers Union, charged them with vagrancy, and, according to the testimony, held them on his plantation and forced them to work in the fields. Peacher was convicted and sentenced to fine and imprisonment, although he was promised

immediate parole. Said the judge when he passed sentence, "This is not a lone case in Arkansas. It occurs frequently."¹¹

Workers as well as farm labourers have been held under these same laws, especially in turpentine and naval stores camps. Florida peonage conditions were accidentally uncovered in 1929 by Orlando J. Armstrong, a southern professor of journalism, and exposed in a New York newspaper. That peonage still can be found in Florida was shown in 1936, when a committee from the International Labor Defense, the National Negro Congress and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People made a wide investigation. In a number of lumber camps forced labour was found.

With the introduction of these coercive provisions, the plantation-sharecropper edifice was rounded out. The South in other words has never completely broken with the old slave economy. Was it not this that President Roosevelt had in mind in his speech on the public square of Gainesville, Georgia, in March, 1938, when he spoke of those Southerners who still believe in their hearts "that the feudal system is still the best system"?

The picture of economic relations under sharecropping has another aspect. It almost seems like a contradiction in terms to say that numbers of croppers by law and custom find themselves virtually bound to the soil, and then to say that the movements of many are characterised by the most extreme mobility. It is not contradictory. Both things are true. We are seeing two different results of the self-same cause. It is said in the National Emergency Council report on the South that more than a third of southern tenant farmers move every year. They move either because the landlord drops them, or because under the wretched conditions to which most croppers are subject they hope that another place and another landlord may be an improvement over the last. Written contracts for cropper families down South are almost unheard of.¹² Even the verbal "contract" ordinarily gives them security of tenure for only one year. One

of the greatest needs of the South, the President's Committee on Farm Tenancy declared, was complete reform in this field of tenant contracts, with the institution of written agreements and longer tenure terms.¹³

The unstable condition of cropper families is bad for the landlord, bad for the land, bad for the tenant and his family, in other words about as bad all-round as could be. The landlord complains that the tenant cares nothing for the land, for the upkeep of buildings, for the machinery and animals he uses, is lazy and irresponsible. If this were true it would be understandable. What is there to inspire the tenant to treat the land as though it were his own precious possession, or his bare cabin as the old family homestead, if he just came onto the plantation last January and may have to move off it again January next? "Under these circumstances the tenant has no incentive to protect the soil, to plant cover crops or keep buildings in repair. On the contrary, he has every reason to mine the soil for every possible penny of immediate return."¹⁴

But let us remember, sharecroppers are not the people they are sometimes painted. Some are victims of the wretchedly unfortunate circumstances under which they perforce must live. Others, in spite of these stultifying conditions, rebel against their lot. I believe it is safe to assert that the problems of southern sharecroppers and the whole land question of the South would not be at the forefront of national attention as it has been in recent years, if in the 1930's the croppers had not organised themselves to better their own conditions, if they had not demanded so that all could hear them the redress of their grievances. To be sure studies were being made, scholars and government experts who have long known what was going on in the South, were making voluminous and valuable reports. But these might well have gone into the dusty archives of history as others have done before them if it had not been for action by sharecroppers themselves. We should remember this when we hear people speaking of the sharecropper in a derogatory way.

What Sharecropping Means

What was the combination of circumstances tending to push a large mass of the Negro people, newly freed from chattel slavery, back into the semi-feudal, bare subsistence status of sharecropping? We should look at the question afresh, if we can, stripped of preconceived notions or prejudices. Scholars are beginning to throw new light on this entire period.

When first freed from slavery, as we know, the Negro people were given citizenship and economic rights under amendments to the Constitution. In practise, however, these were snatched away again. It is here especially that enlightened historians have forced revision of traditional southern teaching. Once the southern conservative leaders returned to their former position of dominance in southern life, so soon as the police and courts and legislatures were once more in their hands, an enormous number of legalised discriminatory practices began to develop against the coloured people. A whole system of segregation was set up. Disfranchisement became general.¹⁶ Besides laws, extra-legal and sometimes violent methods were resorted to at the polls and in public affairs firmly to re-establish the old régime. Traditional southern teaching has it that these are the means by which the South was saved from a dreadful fate. That is not the way the restrictions appeared to the Negro, nor to many later disinterested observers. Even at the time they met protest, especially from those Negro groups which had developed sufficient organisation to voice their feelings.

Abandoned by their former allies, the vast majority of them an unorganised and leaderless peasantry, the Negro people were caught as in a vise.

And what were the consequences? Does not the new light on our history make us ponder whether the Negro's social subjection was not simply a device for making his economic bonds more secure? How else explain what actually happened? Formerly, planters got their labour by owning slaves. With

slavery abolished, we see the former slaves being pressed back into the landlord's service by other means.

But the newly freed men had profoundly human aspirations. They wanted land of their own, freedom of movement, citizenship rights, opportunities for their children. The landowners correctly felt that once the Negro had glimpsed the hope of economic freedom and democratic liberties, it would be no easy matter to force him back into a semi-servile state. With the imposition of every kind of restriction, political and social, on top of the economic, assurance was made doubly sure. The result we can see plainly to-day. A very important part of the South's labour force was placed in a subservient and very helpless position.

Hence to-day the place where sharecropping is most extensively found, where the plantation economy is most firmly rooted, where cotton has longest been raised, is the place where the Negro people live in greatest numbers and where exploitation is the most extreme. This is the Black Belt of the South. In many of the counties included in this great cotton-growing area, the majority of the people are Negroes, and most of the farmers among them are sharecroppers. In some of these counties the farming population is almost entirely coloured, and the tenancy rate is as high as 85% and 90%.¹⁶

The coloured people, however, have not been the only ones to be held at a subsistence level of existence. White farmers were likewise forced into sharecropping. Cotton culture under the plantation system, aggravated by periodic economic depressions, bred destitution everywhere. Many small white farm owners lost their land, and they along with landless whites by the hundreds of thousands were driven to accept sharecropping contracts.

Among both Negro and white farmers tenancy increased rapidly. In the year 1880, when sharecropping was just getting a firm hold, about a third (36%) of all farm operators in the South were tenants.¹⁷ The number increased year by year, until

by 1935 over one-half were tenants, and most of these were farming on shares.

To-day there are more than a million white tenant farmers in the South—more white than there are Negro tenant farmers. The proportion of Negro farmers who are tenants, however, remains far larger; only 46% of white farmers are in the tenant class, while nearly 80% of Negro farmers are tenants, with 68% sharecroppers and share tenants.¹⁸

Sharecropping—The Blind Alley

The landlord-sharecropper relation overshadows all others in southern agriculture, even in the numbers involved. To be sure, there are cash tenants, some 200,000 of them.¹⁹ But they are in a different category entirely. A cash tenant owns his own tools and work animals, rents his farm and dwelling outright, supplies his own food and seed and fertiliser, supervises his own farm. Some cash tenants are very well-to-do, others are very poor; if times are bad they may lose many of their possessions and have to go to farming on shares; but so long as they are cash tenants their economic relation is different entirely from sharecropping. Similarly with owners on family-sized farms. Some of them may be fairly prosperous, even hiring occasional labour. Many own only a few acres—for example, 153,500 out of the one million-plus farm owners own 20 acres or less. Many go to make up that marginal farming class that has been shunted off onto the poorest lands by the plantation economy and are barely able to scratch a living from the soil. If they are mortgaged up to the hilt, as so many are, and economic depression comes along, numbers of them lose their land.²⁰ They must move to the mill towns or go in for farming on shares. So long as they are owners, however, they feel themselves better off than sharecroppers, and in point of economic status they are.

Share tenants, on the other hand, are to be classed with

sharecroppers, even though they are a little better off. The difference lies in their few possessions: they usually own a mule and perhaps a few farm tools, and on this account get a larger share in the contract. Theirs is customarily two-thirds of the crop, instead of the cropper's one-half. It is true that the share tenant feels he is materially better off because of his possessions. Consider what a difference it makes to him and his family to have their own mule, not only for work, but for trips to town upon occasion. In general he feels a bit more of a sense of well-being. But this feeling of added security does not get the share tenant far, for in all essential respects he bears the same economic relation to the landlord as does the cropper. In law and custom their status is usually recognised as the same.²¹

As for the one million "unpaid family workers," they too belong for the most part in the sharecropper class. Some are at work on small owned farms, but estimates show that most of them are the wives and children of tenants working on shares, and of farm wage labourers. To include them completes the picture of the family labour system under which the South's cash crops are raised.²²

The second most numerous group in southern agriculture, next to those at work on shares, are farm wage labourers. There are more than a million in the South, comprising close to a third of the farm labour force. They are scattered all over the region. Many work on plantations side by side with sharecroppers, and thereby hangs a significant story. Their condition should be better than that of croppers—if they actually received regular cash wages, and had freedom of movement and the right to spend what they made as they saw best. Actually the farm labourer in the South is at the bottom of the scale. The cropper's contract provides for year-round work and presumably for year-round "furnishing." But the wage labourer on the plantation, instead of getting cash wages in the usual sense of the term, generally gets his wages in terms of a cabin for his family, and credit for food at the plantation store. Working

only seasonally, he gets paid only for the period when he works, which is by no means the whole year. Being assigned to no particular strip of land, as is the sharecropper, he is likely to get the worst cabins. He has to work just as long hours, gets no better food, his wife and children are under the same necessity to labour in the fields.

There are wage labourers of course in the southern states who work on a cash basis. They are paid by the day for what they do. In some sections, as in the Southwest, the status of some may even resemble that of the farm labourer to be found on northern farms. But in the sharecropping regions, farm labourers commonly are worse off than are croppers themselves. Perhaps only the disappearance of plantation methods could bring much change for them. It is significant to find that 48% of farm wage workers are coloured, a number altogether disproportionate to the size of the coloured population gainfully employed.²³

While it is true that the farm wage labourer commonly suffers the worst conditions, it is not a corollary that sharecropping is therefore a stage higher up. The sharecropper suffers legal and other bonds by reason of the strictures placed upon him when he accepts his so-called "contract" with the landlord.

Some people think of sharecropping (and share tenancy) as a stage lying in between wage-work, which stands at the bottom of the scale, and the independent control of a farm through cash tenancy or farm ownership, which is the next round up. In their minds sharecropping is a step toward farm ownership. Of course there are instances of croppers who have become owners or cash tenants. But the rule is all the other way. In reality, sharecropping is not a step toward anything. A man may one year be a cropper and another be a wage labourer. Because in sharecropping he is a little better off, he sticks to that if he can. A good year may come for a cropper here and there, and he may be able to purchase a work animal—by down payment, likely as not, and the rest in dribs and drabs—and hence get

a larger share of the crop. But then if a bad year comes he may lose his work animal and he is back again as a sharecropper.

In the long run sharecropping becomes a blind alley, down which an ever larger body of southern farm people are being forced to go.

Machines in Cotton Fields

Lately some people have thought they saw signs of the break-up of sharecropping. As cotton-growing (and tobacco-growing) becomes mechanised, they argue, and tractors are used for ploughing and cultivating, and especially if the mechanical cotton picker is perfected, then wage labour will be the only practical kind of labour to use. They point to the great increase in cotton production in the southwestern states of Texas and Oklahoma on whose broad plains many tractors are already at work, and suggest that mechanisation there will force mechanisation elsewhere. The mechanisation of cotton culture is a complex problem. At best we can only raise certain questions here.²⁴

It is true that putting cotton culture on a mechanical basis would require wage labour, thereby not only displacing sharecroppers, but reducing the total number of those required on the land. Such a process has already been going on in Texas, in parts of Oklahoma, and more recently in the Mississippi and Arkansas deltas. An all-purpose pneumatic-tired tractor is now on the market at a price farm owners are able to pay. When combined with the four-row planter and the four-row cultivator, the amount of labour required before harvesting is greatly reduced. In the areas where conditions favour this equipment, work animals are being displaced by tractors, farms formerly let out to tenants are thrown into one, farm families must search for other landlords, or leave the land altogether and seek work in the towns.²⁵ "Large-scale mechanised farming, with labour paid by the day or hour; labour swept off the land and into

the towns from which it is drawn back only during seasonal peaks; labour which is increasingly mobile and without ties to the land—this pattern is incipient in the Cotton Belt.”²⁶ This is the work of the tractor. The perfecting of the cotton picker would mean far more hand labour displacement.

How rapidly mechanisation of all stages occurs will depend in part upon the kinds of machines developed, and to what types of land they are suited. It is one thing to use tractor power and complete mechanisation on the flat land of the Southwest and the Delta country of Mississippi. But then there is the very different terrain in the Southeast. Mechanisation, furthermore, is a very expensive process. Under individual farm ownership it is only practical for large-scale producers who can get enough out of the machines in the short season to make them more profitable than cheap hand labour. Perhaps the Southwest might turn more than ever to capitalist wage labour production. In that case, once the mechanised picker is perfected, mechanisation of cotton culture would probably proceed at a rapid rate.

But would it necessarily follow that the Black Belt of the Southeast would mechanise cotton production? Here a vast supply of cheap hand labour is available, and the land is not so well suited to mechanised production. It is a real question whether under present conditions such highly mechanised and large-scale production would be undertaken in many regions of the old South, especially if an abundance of good cotton could be raised. Would not the cotton produced in the Southwest at lower cost under mechanised conditions force the Black Belt out of production, if the latter could not mechanise? In late years the Southwest has greatly increased its production of cotton until it bids fair to catch up with the old South. It is conceivable that it could produce enough to meet the declining demand on the world market for our cotton. Mechanisation in the Southwest is more likely to force the old South, raising most of its cotton in much the old way, and with much the old

form of labour, also to try to lower production costs, in order to compete. This lower cost could come about in only one way, by driving to still worse levels of destitution, if that were possible, the sharecropper and farm wage-workers of the lower South. Displacement of labor would certainly occur in both the Southwest and the old South. A still larger labour reserve would result. The condition of large numbers of farming people could not fail to become even worse than it is to-day.

There would be some compensation for all this if the machine would automatically destroy the plantation-sharecropper system. In the long run that would improve the position of the southern farmer. Yet it is amazing how long old economic relations can continue to live side-by-side with new, and continue to drag down the conditions that might otherwise see marked improvement under the new techniques. In any case, there is the problem of displaced farm labour.

Of course the answer is not to delay mechanisation of agriculture, but to find a way to turn it to human betterment. So the Rust brothers, John and Mack, think as they labour on their mechanical cotton picker. Theirs is not the only picker in process of development, but it is the best known. By latest account it is now reaching a stage when it can be put to practical use.* Far more than the mechanisation of cultivation, a picking

* For a description of the Rust brothers mechanical cotton picker see *Harper's Magazine*, September, 1936, article by Robert K. Straus (pp. 386 ff.). Oscar Johnston, manager of one of the largest cotton plantations in the world at Scott, Mississippi, the Delta and Pine Land Co., was reported as saying that under the sharecropper system it costs so little to have cotton cultivated that he saw "little crying economic need" for the development of a picker. (*People's Press*, Sept. 12, 1936.) Whether or not Johnston was quoted correctly, the facts demonstrate that mechanisation reduces costs. As early as 1931 a study was made of five plantations using wage labour and tractors, and of five others using sharecroppers and mules. The partly mechanised plantation (average yield $\frac{7}{10}$ of a bale per acre) produced a bale of lint cotton on the average for \$41.90 total cost, whereas for the plantations operating under old conditions the total cost came to \$66.40 per bale. (Robt. K. Straus, *Harper's Magazine*, Sept., 1936.) A cotton picker would under favourable

machine will displace labour by hand. In cotton culture it is in the harvesting of the crop that labour not only of adults but of hordes of little children can be used. A child of six as well as a man of 40 can tell when the clinging white fibre is ready to be plucked from the wide-open boll.

Few inventors, I venture to say, consider the social implications of their invention. In this John and Mack Rust are outstanding among their kind. They see their cotton picker able to pick far more cheaply than can be done by hand, at least on the better lands where the yield per acre is large. On that account they see large numbers of labourers driven off the land. (One estimate puts it at a million persons.) Under economic conditions of our day and age that is bound to mean great suffering. Where then may these farming people turn for a livelihood? The Rusts are remarkable in having considered how they might aid the readjustment of the displaced farming people once their cotton picker is widely adopted. Perhaps, so they have thought, they might retain title to the machines, and only lease them to those planters who would guarantee fair wages and conditions of work. To assist those who would be displaced, they have considered the plan of setting up a foundation into which would go the profits from the cotton picker, and which would aid the displaced croppers to establish co-operative enterprises on the land.²⁷

Those who have talked with John and Mack Rust say they have no illusions about the baffling nature of their problem. They know that they can do little by themselves to ease the change. They do not on that account think mechanisation should be delayed. "Any machine," they say, "which relieves human labor is a step in the right direction."²⁸

But why should so large-scale a social readjustment be left to the inventors of the machine to solve, admirable as it is that they ponder it and are ready to contribute to a solution? At the conditions give a further advantage to the mechanised plantations by reducing costs.

least we should have a broadly conceived farm program instituted by the federal government to deal with situations such as those created by mechanisation. Unquestionably, too, strong trade unions of farm labourers, if they were formed as rapidly as mechanisation progresses, would be able to improve the conditions of those who remain on the land. At the same time they could insist upon the protection and relief of those who are being displaced.

CHAPTER III. DIFFERENTIALS IN INDUSTRY

Differential wages have long been the mark of southern industry. Until the federal Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 was passed little had happened to bring about a change. The man who worked in a Carolina cotton mill, even if he had been a weaver or loom fixer or slasher tender for 10, 15, 20 years, saw his fellow worker at the same machine in Massachusetts earning a 20% to 30% higher wage than he. The woman who in a southern mill laboured as spinner or drawer-in or any other trade usual for women, found the textile woman's wage in the North to be 30% to 40% higher than hers. The man employed by a southern iron foundry, however experienced he might be, yet saw his counterpart in Illinois receiving around 20% more than he. The Alabama coal miner was paid the lowest wage of any miner, North or South. In general northern miners' earnings ran more than 30% above southern.¹

Whether it was cotton textiles, hosiery mills, steel mills, tobacco factories, furniture factories, coal mines, lumber camps, the story was the same. The men and women, boys and girls, who worked in northern states received wages ranging from 20% to 40% more than those of workers at the same processes in the South.² Only the southern workers who had been able to bring strong trade union pressure could begin to close the gap between wages North and South. Until lately the number of organised trades was relatively small.

It may seem a far call from the sharecropper's cabin to a spinning frame. But the fertile soil breeding discrimination is

the southern agrarian system. This is an entirely familiar fact to the economic historian, that industrial workers' standards should be pulled down by a depressed agricultural "reserve." Agricultural labour constitutes such a reserve wherever its conditions are materially worse than those of even the poorest workers in the town. In Dixie when the sharecropper moves into the town worker's shoes, it amounts to a change for him from a barefoot existence to brogans.

How this came about is a story made familiar by novelist and historian. Just as the recruiting agent more than a hundred years ago went into Vermont and New Hampshire to draw farmers' daughters to work in New England's first cotton mills, so in the latter nineteenth century recruiting agents from the South's expanding textile industry went into the southern countryside. They went to the bleak cabins of proud, poverty-stricken mountain folk, and to the shacks of depressed sharecroppers, to offer them and all in their families, even the very young and the very old, work at cash wages in the mills. The picture conjured up for these deprived rural people by the extravagant promises of agents—money in hand, food enough to eat, a home instead of a cabin, schooling for their children—started a veritable trek of rural families to the mill hills of the Carolinas, Georgia and Alabama.

To these farm families who came to mills from conditions bordering on destitution, cash of any kind, even under a dollar a day for a full-grown man and head of a family, was better than what they had formerly had.⁸ How could they know there were weavers and spinners in the North getting almost twice as much? How could they guess that these paltry sums would lift them so little above the level at which they had lived before? By the time textile manufacture was established in the Piedmont, New England mill workers had 50 years or more of experience behind them. They had passed beyond the stage of acutely depressed wages into the period when by dint of labor

struggles they had won a little higher pay. The raw recruits in southern mills, completely isolated from the outside, new to machines, utterly ignorant of the existence of trade unions, at the time had little choice but to take any wage that was offered them, even after they had learned to be efficient operatives. Little did they dream that here was the beginning of a vicious train of circumstances that would penetrate all industries as each became established. Their fate was to be shared by every section of the South's common people drawn to the factories from the land.

Even when recruits for the new industries came from the towns, they came from a working class much worse off than was labour in the North. An economy retarded for decades by an agrarian slave régime, then devastated by four years of destructive war fought on its own territory, and on top of that, subject to the havoc wrought by periodic economic crises, left the common people in a serious state. Certainly at the very outset they could do little about the low wages industry offered. Primarily, we must remember, it was this lure of "cheap labour" and the huge profit it promised that drew outside industrial capital to the South.

As the years passed, share tenancy increased, drawing under its depressing influence ever large numbers of white farmers. To escape their destitute condition the rural population began to press against the towns. In the 20 years after 1900 the urban population in the South increased by 114% and has continued to increase at a rapid rate ever since.⁴

Repeated economic crises in the twentieth century periodically created large pools of industrial unemployed. Labour in the South as well as in the North and West made valiant attempts at organised action, but with us the labour movement was very weak. So great a labour surplus helped to encourage the wage differential.

It never happens that evils come singly out of conditions so grossly unbalanced as these. Under such a competitive situa-

tion the weaker groups will be more severely exploited than any others.

Children particularly suffer. They are in a peculiarly exposed position. Driven to wage-earning by family poverty, how poignantly helpless these little ones are to do anything but accept whatever conditions of employment they are offered. Women are also at a disadvantage. It has been accepted practice everywhere for women to be paid at a lower rate, even though they work on the same machine and at the same process as men. And to receive lower pay than men down South is to get low wages indeed. But of all specially exposed groups in the region, the Negro suffers most. Whether farmer, worker or middle class, he is discriminated against in a hundred ways.

Economic Discrimination Against the Negro

From the standpoint of labour's well-being, white as well as coloured, it is disastrous for the Negro to be paid a differential wage. For the lower pay of one is bound to pull down the wages of the other. Yet this form of discrimination is rife in the South, in fact it is universally practised.

There are numerous coloured building trades craftsmen, but they are habitually paid a lower rate. For example, white carpenters in Virginia several years ago were earning \$6.24 a day, and coloured carpenters only \$4.22. Over a period of 23 years in Virginia the average daily wage of Negro plasterers was consistently 20% lower than for white plasterers, of Negro lathers 18% lower; of Negro bricklayers, 29% lower.⁵ Ten years ago the earnings of labour on cotton compresses showed a striking colour differential: white markers earned \$24 a week, coloured \$16.16; white weighers and checkers \$29.24, coloured \$14.95; white samplers \$27.83, coloured \$18.83.⁶ It is no accident that coloured labour far outnumbered white in this trade.

Furthermore there are numerous devious devices which keep down coloured workers' earnings.⁷ In one place where work is by

the piece they may be given the most difficult patterns to follow, perforce taking longer and therefore earning less, or they may be put on low time rates when piece rates, allowed only to white workers, bring in more. Sometimes a job is classified as unskilled if a Negro is hired, but if it is given to a white worker this same job is classified as skilled. The coloured worker does the same work as the white but gets the lower "unskilled" rate of pay. Any coloured worker in a steel mill, coal mine or fertiliser factory, can relate any number of such practises.

It is common for the poorest jobs to be reserved for coloured workers. In the southern steel industry coloured workers have very little opportunity at the better types of work although they comprise about 30% of the steel labour force. In the Birmingham area, heart of the South's steel industry, they constitute, it is said, about three-fourths of the working force. Most of them are consigned to work in blast furnaces, a department where there are fewer highly skilled jobs than in steel works and rolling mills. Altogether Negroes constitute 72% of the common labour force. In consequence of these discriminatory practices their earnings run far below those of white workers—on the average 46.5¢ an hour as compared with 71¢.⁸

On those jobs where only Negro workers are employed there is hardly any bottom to their wages. In the 1920's the earnings of coloured women in such factory jobs sometimes ran as low as \$2, \$4, and \$5 a week.⁹ The general level of coloured workers' earnings are lower than white because they are shut out from the better positions or receive lower rates for the same work. White women workers in Alabama averaged \$8.31 a week—disgraceful enough as a wage—but coloured women averaged only \$6.20. Similarly in Georgia, the white group earned around \$10, the coloured women \$6. The same condition prevailed in every southern state.

Only the Negro people themselves know fully how tight-shut is the door to job opportunities to those dark of skin. Besides being relegated to the worst jobs and the heaviest work,

they have little chance for advancement. It requires the greatest perseverance and courage for a coloured person to overcome the obstacles standing between him and a skilled or professional occupation.

We hardly need add that the same thing goes on in northern cities. In recent years in Harlem (New York City) and other places where large numbers of Negroes live, prolonged economic struggle by citizens' committees and labour groups have been carried on against the discriminatory practices of white firms in refusing to employ Negroes for any but menial work, even though these firms depend almost entirely on Negro trade.

Altogether the discriminations practised against the Negro have put him at a serious economic disadvantage. Most of the South's 9 million Negroes have had to remain in agriculture, and in the poorest agricultural work at that. In the towns the types of work open to them are very limited. Comprising about a third of the total gainfully occupied, Negroes hold only 8% of the skilled positions, and 18% of the semi-skilled. They are restricted mainly to the lowest paying work—domestic service and common labour. They are approximately 50% of the unskilled labour force in factories and building construction, and 80% of the servant classes. They are 61% of labourers in iron and steel mills, 52% of labourers in the building industry, 57% of labourers in sawing and planing mills. As we saw in the case of steel, they have few opportunities to enter the more highly skilled trades. Only 11.5% of southern carpenters are coloured, and only 5% of southern machinists. In the South's greatest manufacturing industry, textiles, only 1.5% of the operatives are coloured, and most of these are at outside work, and at sweeping and other common labour jobs in the mills.¹⁰ When the NRA Code for textiles was drawn, it was just these occupations that were excluded from the minimum wage provisions.

The general run of southern employers undoubtedly argue that there is a difference in the efficiency of coloured and white labour. They made something of it when it came to setting

differential wages at the time of the NRA codes. Several enquiries have been made on the subject, and while most of them have had to depend upon the opinions of employers, these opinions were secured from northern firms where there is less discrimination and more tendency to judge the Negro, once he is employed, on his merits. For example, of over 100 firms reporting in Detroit, about three-fourths state that Negro workers showed the same efficiency or greater efficiency than whites; in Chicago of 56 firms studied over four-fifths made a similar report. Robert C. Weaver of the United States Department of the Interior, who brought these findings together, commented upon them as follows:

Although these data speak for themselves, a word should be said by way of explanation. In the first place, statistical material can never tell the whole picture. The Negro is not offered the same inducement to increase his efficiency as is his white prototype. Working conditions in the South are particularly unfavourable and in all sections of the country there are few inducements for efficiency by way of better jobs which act upon the colored workers. This employer assertion of equal efficiency for Negro workers assumes greater importance and significance. It means that in spite of the traditional attitude toward the Negro, and in the face of the smaller likelihood of promotion that presents itself to colored workers, their labor has so proved its worth that it is judged to be as efficient as that of another group which has enjoyed and does enjoy greater advantages. This evidence points to the potentialities of Negro labor, if it is treated in a more just and sympathetic manner.¹¹

“Protecting” White Labour

In some circles, paying higher wages to white workers than to coloured is considered a sign of white caste solidarity. Employers are showing favouritism toward white workers, so it is argued, and thereby upholding “white supremacy.” Employers pay coloured workers less because the latter are “innately in-

ferior"; employers help to "keep the Negro in his place"; and hence, when they discriminate against Negroes, employers are protecting the interests of the white workers.

It is true that some southern white workers have been misled into subscribing to these discriminations against the Negro. Hard pressed economically themselves, too often they have heeded the voices that tell them their own place and position are thereby made more secure.

Responsible labour leaders would tell us from their experience that no claim of security for workers is more illusory, more false, than that built on a division in labour's own ranks. Why, in a well-organised industry like the building trades, are white carpenters' wages lower in southern cities than in northern? What does a contractor do who wants to bring southern white carpenters to terms? He reminds them that on the other side of town are coloured carpenters. They too may be organised in a union, but it is probably a separate union because the white union may permit nothing else. The daily wage rate of the coloured unionists is lower than the white, because employers have insisted upon paying coloured workers less. But why? The white carpenters may have been persuaded to believe their wages would drop to the lower rates of coloured workers if they did not stand out for a differential favouring whites. This is of course absurd. All the contractor has to do to keep the white wage rate down is to threaten to hire coloured carpenters on the job at their lower rate. Ill-feeling all around is bred. Who wins by all this? Certainly not the white carpenters' union, nor yet the coloured.

Is this what the southern employer of 40 years ago had in mind when the Southern Industrial Convention, an employers' association, sent a representative to address the United States Industrial Commission? Negro workers, the employers' pronouncement declared, are "reserve production capital." "In the Negro labour of the South lies the panacea for the wrongs fre-

quently committed by organised labour, and a reserve force from which can be supplied any needed number of workers when the time shall come that they will be needed.”¹² The Negro as a reserve force, they argued, could be used to “keep out much of the agitation of labour in the South.” “The employer must have something to hold over union organization....”¹³ Employers were of course assuming that white and Negro workers would remain divided, that white workers would bar Negro workers from their trade unions. And sad to relate many white unions did.

Despite all we have been taught to the contrary as Southerners, and no doubt as Northerners too, in an issue like this of wage and job discrimination against the Negro, the real question is not racial. The problem is rooted elsewhere. The Negro people are paid lower wages, are shut out from job opportunities, are humiliated by severe social discriminations, because thereby, in the terms of the southern employers’ association of 40 years ago, they may be kept as “reserve production capital.” They constitute a “cheap labour” pool.

Child Labour

Children are a notorious source of cheap southern labour. Cotton and tobacco plantations abound in child labourers. In fact, most young labourers in the entire United States are to be found here.* If we go in season we shall find them chopping cotton, picking cotton, worming and topping tobacco plants. Boys at 12

* The census counts as child labourers all working boys and girls 10-17 years of age. (It does not get information on children under 10 who work, which in the South eliminates from the count thousands of children.) At the last census the total aged 10-17 at work in the United States was 2,145,959; one-half of these were in the three southern divisions. Over 667,000 children 10-15 years of age were at work; of this young group nearly 500,000 or approximately three-fourths laboured in the South, and well over four-fifths worked in agriculture. (See Lumpkin and Douglas, *op. cit.*, pp. 86-97 for discussion of this concentration of the child labourers of America in southern agriculture.)

or 13 are beginning to plough and do a "man's work" all along the line.

Would some ask, What harm is done by their working? Some people, comfortably off themselves, have two sets of standards for child welfare, one for their own children, those of the "upper" classes, and another for the "lower class" child. But wherein can we justify such a double standard?

There are things which all children require, if they are to grow up into a happy life with the opportunity to develop fully. Every child needs good food, adequate shelter, decent clothing (even if it cannot be aesthetically pleasing.) Every child needs health care, preventive as well as remedial. He needs a security born of a home where parents are freed from the constant worry as to where the next meal is coming from. Every child in our country should be guaranteed nine months' schooling a year at least up to the age of 16, with no interruptions caused by the necessity to go out to work; and good schooling at that, where physical plant and equipment are up to standard, where teachers are well-trained and adequately paid. Every child needs plenty of free time to play, and plenty of recreation facilities; and finally he needs, as a plant needs the sun, an expanding cultural life so richly possible in our age. An impossibly idealistic picture? How can we think so when it is what the children of well-to-do homes get, at least in large part, taking it for granted as their rightful heritage?

There is a great gap between the life of such children and the life of the sharecropper's son. The cropper's boy has emerged into manhood at the age of 12. Side by side with his father he begins in February the spring's first chores. He ploughs when ploughing-time comes, he helps to plant and chop and lay-by in season, and then to pick and pick and pick, into the late fall.

At 12 years the cropper's child has had about all the schooling that will ever come to him. He went when he could to the country school a mile or two from home, during the four months it keeps open in the little two-room school house that houses

all the grades. A rare trip to town several miles away, hanging around the plantation store with his father and other croppers once a week to receive the family supplies, going to services at the bare country church on Sundays; these make up his "cultural" life. Unless we add to that the old newspapers pasted on the walls to cover the cracks in the two-and-a-half room cabin his family calls home.

His younger brothers and sisters, from six years up, are under the same necessity as he is to work, at whatever field tasks they are able to do. The youngest cannot plough and chop, but they can pick, and this they must do so soon as the bolls begin to burst in the landlord's fields. To-day the cotton is ready; to-morrow rain might come. Out to the fields troop man, wife and children as soon as the sun rises, sacks slung across their shoulders. Even the six-year-olds have their sacks to fill and drag along behind them. A sack short enough to fit their small forms would hardly carry any cotton at all.

Have we in the South become, not callous perhaps, but at least fatalistic about this picture? Few of us from the lower South have not seen it a hundred times. Have we fallen prey to those attempted explanations that do not explain? (True enough we have heard many a Northerner attempt the same explanations.) Do we too repeat the catch phrases current among comfortably placed people, that children of croppers and of wage-earners too, labour because their parents are "ignorant," are "lazy and indifferent," "want them to," "care nothing for an education anyhow"? Even if some parents, brought up themselves in destitution, and now able to offer nothing better to their children, seem to be like this, what does that show but that the conditions are grossly at fault? As a matter of fact, I am certain no people anywhere have been more maligned by superficial judgments than the so-called "poor whites" of the South and the poorest Negro people. We learn this quickly enough when we see them organise into unions, as southern miners and textile workers have been trying to do for decades,

and as southern sharecroppers, white and coloured in joint organisations, have lately begun to do.

Some, we are constrained to believe, are indeed callous. If they were not, our record of young children at work would not be so shameful. There is but one reason for employing young children: there being certain tasks they can do, they can be hired at very cheap rates. And while they cannot do as much as adults in the same length of time, it does not matter from the standpoint of profits, for most of the jobs assigned them are not on expensive machines, but at hand work. Child labour of this kind represents a substantial gain to the employer.

In cotton picking a child of six or seven may not bring in nearly as much as an adult, but he is only paid for what he does. Or if he is a cropper's child, then the cropper is allotted acres in proportion to the "hands" in his family—large families preferred. In canneries where many children labour, they are paid by the amount they do; and at berry picking, or tobacco worming and similar tasks, it is the same. If the child is in street work—hawking newspapers, for example,—then he gets paid only in proportion to what he sells, and there is the appeal of his extreme youth to the passer-by, which presumably would make for more sales; at least so the sales managers think.¹⁴ If it is industrial home work, there again work is by the piece, and if small hands can do less than grown hands, that is no loss to the contractor who lets out the work; and work poorly done is rejected. As for children in domestic and personal service—they get hardly any wages at all. In turpentine camps there are many tasks the small child can do with no risk of loss to the owner—and at the usual extremely low rates of pay. Only from jobs requiring a little more of the competence and responsibility that come with advancing maturity have the younger children been shut out. The tasks of errand and delivery boys are easy, but they cannot be paid by the "piece," so the boys of at least 13, 14, and 15 are preferred. Similarly for work in stores. In particular, the youngest children (under 13 and 14) are not

wanted much any more in factories. The machines are far too expensive to warrant bungling. It is true, employers have opposed regulation of the work of children in factories and stores whenever legislation has been brought forward, but once the little ones of under 13 and 14 were excluded, employers learned it was not so great a loss to them after all.¹⁵ Be it noted, our southern states' laws still permit children of 14 to work in factories, and some, by "poverty clauses" even let 13-year olds get in by the back door.* Passage of the federal Fair Labor Standards Act, if it is left on the statute books, can do something to eradicate this evil.

With so many tasks still open to young children in Dixie and with so many parents living at a bare subsistence level, the result is a concentration below Mason and Dixon's line of three-fourths of the country's younger child labourers.¹⁶ Consider the appalling fact that at least 10% of our younger children—it is less than 2% in the North—are forced into wage-earning. Nearly half of the boys and girls of this young group are 13 years old and less.

The heaviest load falls on the child of Negro parents. Of course there are fewer coloured than white children in the population—only a fourth as many. Even so, one-half of the child labour force is coloured. Or to put it another way, proportionate to their numbers twice as many coloured children as white must go into wage-earning.

The entire child labour problem, if we are to appreciate what it means and how it can be solved, must be seen as a piece in the larger pattern of southern exploitation. It stems from the same causes and plays its part in creating the resulting effects. That the body of child labourers is no mean factor in low

* Of the nearly 500,000 children, 10-15 years of age, in the South, about 70,000 were engaged in non-agricultural occupations. The largest number of these worked in factories—about 28,000; the next largest group, something under 23,000, were in domestic and personal service; over 17,000 were at work in stores, as newsboys, delivery boys and other occupations listed under "trade."

southern labour standards is made plain by the numbers involved. Although the proportion is 10% of those 15 years and under in the region as a whole, in a Black Belt State like Mississippi, 31% of the young boys 15 and under and 19% of the young girls are labourers.

Discrimination Against Women

There is no need to dwell long on the wage discrimination practised against women workers. In all times and places women wage-earners have been paid less than men, even for the same work. Of course this form of discrimination would prevail in a region like the South where the conditions so facilitate all forms of wage differential.¹⁷

Stress should rather be laid on the relation of the low wages women receive to general wage standards. It is not so much that women offer a direct competitive threat to men's wages, though in certain restricted occupations this is so. What should concern us more is the general effect flowing from yet another large body of low paid labour. More than a fifth of all southern women work outside the home—that includes sharecroppers' wives who come under the census classification of "unpaid family labour." Women constitute about a fourth of the entire labour force. In the light industries, textiles in particular, women operatives are about as numerous as men. And cotton textiles are the backbone of southern manufacturing enterprise.

It is profoundly significant that on those types of work where women are chiefly employed—agriculture and textiles—there the "family" system prevails. What does that principally mean? That in those fields the "chief wage earner," presumably the father of a family, must expect to have his income supplemented by the work of wife and children, if the family is to subsist. He alone does not receive enough for his family to live on.

Where the train of circumstances begins does not matter. The main point is, it does not end, but once begun, goes round and

round. The man is paid low wages, and that drives his wife to work. His wife is paid lower wages still, which drives down the man's rates further. The "family" system, once established, draws the children into its net, for as they come along, more stomachs must be fed, more backs clothed. They leave school and go to work too.

Needless to say, the solution is not to prevent women from working. Women find satisfaction in work, and have a right to work. (It goes without saying that child labour should be abolished.) The solution must be directed toward the general wage level, shortening the hours of labour, and bringing all forms of discrimination to an end.

The Menace of Unemployment

Added to other elements in the vicious circle is the menace that lies in widespread unemployment. Post-World War retrenchment and the economic crisis of 1921 threw the South's leading industry, textiles, into a slump. The prolonged crisis following 1929 caused unemployment in all types of industry and in agriculture. We experienced the return of a depression in 1937-1938.

We do not know the number of unemployed in the South either for the early 1930's or to-day. But knowing what proportion of the population has to receive public relief we can get a picture of the amount of destitution. In 1933, 13% of the people in the southern states were recipients of public aid. In January, 1935, the number rose to 17%, or more than one-sixth of the total southern population. In some of our states it was a fifth, a fourth and even more of the population.¹⁸ Of the Negro people some 25%—a figure for the United States—were receiving aid.¹⁹

Of course it is not simply a question of the number out of work at any one time. A much larger number have been unemployed and underemployed throughout a period of nearly

two decades. Consequently an appalling proportion of the population have had their resources depleted and have been in want.²⁰

Conditions became extremely critical at those periodic relief crises when federal funds were withdrawn and relief was left to local governments. Often that meant no relief at all. It happened in 1935 when direct relief was being replaced by work relief under the WPA. Local papers headlined the crisis.

In Louisiana, they said, "Hunger is rife here. The permanent shutdown of FERA in Louisiana leaves New Orleans with about 9,000 persons, most of them heads of families, destitute and with nowhere to turn." In Alabama, "Some 20,000 residents of Jefferson County . . . face actual starvation this week. Some of them, without food Sunday, already are starving."²¹

Government investigators, visiting homes at random in Macon and Atlanta, Georgia, found unbelievable conditions.

"Investigation of 94 of the Macon households concerned between July 15 and August 15 revealed that 29 had been averaging somewhat less than two meals a day. Six reported one meal a day; five reported four meals in three days, and 18 reported five meals in three days. Fifty-one reported two meals a day and only 12 reported three meals a day."

"Butter, eggs and milk, bacon, ham and beef had practically disappeared from the tables of these people, it was found. . . . They were reduced to a diet chiefly of cornmeal, meat skins and grits."²²

When people were on direct relief their circumstances were bad enough. "Their average income then was \$8.59 for the last full month of federal relief, while a third of them got less than \$6." But after federal funds were cut, "These miserable less-than-subsistence incomes were found to be reduced by one-fourth to one-third or more." In Atlanta 133 cases selected at random were kept track of by the FERA for several months after they had been cut off relief in June, 1935.

"They (the investigators) found that 16 of them had been

reduced to one meal a day, and only 10 were eating regularly. Many were found to be spending much of their time searching for food in refuse cans and curb market waste....”

“Twenty-six families had incomes of less than \$6 for the month of July 15 to August 15, and 18 reported no cash income whatever. Nearly all were found to be sadly lacking in food, clothing and medical care—some of them being bedridden and ‘obviously suffering from pain and discomfort and sorely in need of medical attention.’ Housing was found to be ‘much below any decency standard.’ ”²³

The most serious unemployment problem is in the rural districts. Estimates by the National Emergency Council report on the South show among the young people alone, those emerging into the age group of 15-25 years, about 1,750,000 have remained on farms either totally unemployed or as casual labourers—getting work when and if they can. The already restricted job opportunities of Negroes have suffered further restrictions, due to the tendency for white unemployed to try to get any work they can, even the kind formerly considered as belonging to the coloured man.

Living Costs

There are those who insist that no real differential is suffered by southern labour. Living costs are so much lower in the South, they say, that no hardship is worked. Industry is wont to explain away our lower southern wage scale in these terms. Yet there is about as much truth in this claim as in the old fallacy that two can live as cheaply as one.

Before the crisis of 1929 it cost even more to live in some of our populous centers—for example, the cotton mill communities of Greenville, South Carolina, and Charlotte, North Carolina,—than in Fall River and Lawrence, Mass.²⁴ Government reports have found that “the difference in food costs for a fixed diet vary little from region to region....”²⁵ A recently

published WPA survey made in 1935 bears out this conclusion. Comparisons made of northern and southern cities of the same general size show costs to be sometimes higher in the southern city, sometimes in the northern. Living for a family of four cost a little more in Atlanta, Georgia, than in Columbus, Ohio; in Richmond, Virginia, than in Providence, Rhode Island; in Manchester, New Hampshire, than in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. It was about the same in Columbia, South Carolina, and Cedar Rapids, Iowa. In Providence it was higher than in Dallas, Birmingham and Memphis, in Houston than in Columbus.²⁶ That there is a slight difference between sections is agreed. But even in food costs, whereas in the South some items cost less, others cost more.²⁷

The fallacy of lower living-costs is beginning to lose ground even in the South. When the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 was passed by Congress, the *Richmond Times Dispatch* commented:²⁸ "If before the expiration of the seven-year limit, the freight rate differential has been eliminated, we see no reason why Southern factories with equally efficient labour should not be ordered to pay the same wage as their Northern competitors. We put no credence in the argument that Southern living costs are lower. *The Southern worker has been living on less because he makes less, not because it costs him less to live.*"

The cost of living for workers obliged to trade at company stores is even higher than for workers in general.²⁹ In Virginia the worker who had to purchase his food at a company store, paid at least 2% more than if he had been able to buy at a neighbouring independent store, in Tennessee he paid 10% more; in other states the difference was somewhere between these two extremes. This leaves out of account the exorbitant prices charged to sharecroppers in plantation stores.

Great stress has been laid on the alleged difference in rents.*

* Southern textile employers sometimes try to justify the differential wage by pointing to the additions to wages that mill workers get in company owned villages in the form of lower rents, electricity, etc., the

One government report made during the NRA, however, said that "no significant regional difference in rents" existed; "the principal element was size of city."³⁰ Another found, besides the differences due to size of towns, a North-South differential of about 7% to 10%.³¹ But since rent, at most, does not take up more than a quarter of a worker's budget, a 7% to 10% difference in rent could not make more than a 2% to 2.5% difference in his total budget. Hardly enough, one would say, to justify a differential in wages ranging up to 50%!

Taking industry's own figures, we find the difference in living costs North and South to be admittedly very slight, leaving a wide gap between northern and southern wages.³² The National Emergency Council's report puts the difference between cities at less than 5%.

Lower Productivity?

Another favourite argument used by management to justify the southern differential in pay is that southern labour is less productive. Hence, they say, southern industry without the differential would be at a competitive disadvantage.

The truth is that little scientific information exists on this question.* Most claims for lower productivity are based on nothing more reliable than the personal opinion of some south-implication being that southern manufacturers therefore enjoy no competitive advantage over northern wage rates. A Massachusetts textile manufacturer at a Washington hearing in 1935, took the southern mill men to task for so fallacious an argument. "If this is true," he declared, "... there should be no objection (by southern textile employers) to a plan for putting southern wages on the same basis as those in the North, and at the same time placing on a self-supporting basis the cottage rentals, electric lights, and water rates and other services given by the mills to their workers free of charge. Most workers prefer to have cash in their pay envelopes even if they have to pay some of it back in rents and electric lights later." (*Daily News Record*, May 7, 1935.)

* "The question of relative productivity of labour in the North and in the South is one about which practically nothing is known...." ("Wage Differentials, City versus Small Town and North versus South," *op. cit.*)

ern employers—which we can hardly consider as unbiased. It is of course a fair presumption that those sections of the southern working class that all their lives have been severely undernourished in consequence of low wages, would have their efficiency impaired. To add to this, they have been ravaged by all manner of poor men's diseases. This is even more true of coloured workers than of white because of the former's unusually depressed condition. But of those workers at the higher levels of skill who have been able to buy themselves and their families a reasonably adequate diet, we should expect no difference in efficiency.

The argument is peculiarly suspect, moreover, when southern business men use it to prevent abolition of the differential, and then, in order to attract northern industries, turn around and claim that "it is the established superiority of Southern mill help that develops one of the South's most potent advantages in the field of industry."⁸³

Higher Freight Rates

Lately the discriminatory freight rates suffered by the South have been made by some a plea for keeping differential wages. To be sure, southern shippers have been victimised by serious discrimination in the matter of freight rates. They pay more to ship goods within the section than do shippers in the North; they also pay more to ship goods out of the section. To ship 100 pounds of a certain type of merchandise first class the first 100 miles in the South costs at prevailing rates (1938) 76¢; at Eastern rates these same goods were reported to cost 56¢. To ship cotton piece goods from Macon, Georgia, to Toledo, Ohio, would cost 99¢ per cwt. The same goods sent from Fall River, Massachusetts, to Toledo, the same distance, would be charged at the rate of 91¢ per cwt. One estimate puts train-mile operating cost in the Eastern district at \$2.186, while in the South it is \$1.648. In the country as a whole it is \$1.924.⁸⁴ The report on

the South of the National Emergency Council shows that a southeastern manufacturer wishing to ship goods into the Northeast is at a 39% disadvantage in freight rates with the manufacturer outside, while the southwestern manufacturer is at a 75% disadvantage.

Freight rate discrimination of this kind should certainly be ended. But would wiping out this disadvantage to southern shippers turn the advocates of a southern wage differential into opponents of low wages? Much as we would like to think so, we cannot but be sceptical. Regardless of what happens to freight rates there is every likelihood that those favouring them will spare no effort to maintain wage differences. Even under the Fair Labor Standards Act they may try to do so, so long as it allows the exceptions it does in the determination of minimum wages.

CHAPTER IV. LIVELIHOOD

The southern economy has bred a wretched human situation. It could serve no useful purpose to minimise that fact. With agriculture still suffering many hangovers from a slave régime past; with industry's most cherished "advantage" a cheap labour supply, kept cheap by differential wages, why would we not have bad conditions, except as welfare legislation and labour organisation could modify them?

Due to a number of factors there has been some improvement in recent years. But still wages remain very low, and hence the living level. *Collier's Weekly* of November 13, 1937, reproduced an illuminating wage slip of a typical Greenville, S. C. mill worker whose total earnings for a 40-hour week were \$13.60. But the textile worker did not get this sum in cash. For the week in question the cash enclosed was nil. Deductions, of which \$12.26 had gone to his account at the company store where perforce he must trade, had swallowed up his pay.

This worker was better off, to be sure, than the sharecropper on a Carolina plantation. Low as his earnings were, they allowed him more than the "furnished" sharecropper could hope for, and if his family were not too large, more in variety. If not this week, then some other perhaps he might have a little cash left in his pay envelope. His hours of work were shorter. The house he lived in was more substantial, his life in general a little less monotonous. But \$13.60, even had this worker received it in cash, and even had his wife been able to purchase the family supplies at the non-company store where they would have been cheaper, by no stretch of the imagination could be termed a

"living wage." It spells a level far below the poverty line. Yet this man's wage was not unusual.* In 1936-1937 the general run of cotton mill workers were earning between \$13 and \$14 a week.¹

In some industries, especially those where men are chiefly employed, as in iron and steel and coal mining, the level of wages is higher. In 1936 Alabama coal miners were averaging \$16.79, and those in Kentucky and Virginia somewhat better.² On the other hand there are industries where earnings fall below even the cotton textile level.

True enough, these figures do not tell us what a family's total income might be. Very often the work is seasonal or part-time. On the other hand, more than one member of a family is often employed. The cotton mills in particular are known ironically enough as a "family industry." Many mills give open preference to workers with large families, for the manufacturer, like the planter, counts on extra "hands"—man and wife and every child above minimum working age. A prime reason why all the members who can must work, however, is not alone the low wages, but the irregularity of work. In these years of recurrent economic depression and highly seasonal employment, families are fortunate if they get the equivalent of one member's pay in a year.

In 1935-1936 three government agencies co-operated in a survey of actual family incomes.³ One place that the investigators covered was Gastonia, North Carolina. Gastonia is crowded with cotton mills; its people are largely textile workers. There some 46% of the white families were living on less than \$1,000 a year. This is total family income. Seventeen percent existed on less than \$500 annually, with some of them completely destitute and receiving relief. The Negro families were in a far worse state, 92%—virtually all of them—falling

* Before the economic crisis of 1929 the average in cotton textiles had been at about the same level as cited above. (See Heer, *op. cit.*, p. 30.) During the depression wages dropped to far lower levels.

below the \$1,000 income figure, while more than half had to live on less than \$500. In villages in Georgia and South Carolina, and even in large cities like Atlanta, a similar condition was found. An investigation of iron and steel workers' earnings in 1934 (which does not distinguish between coloured and white earnings) showed nearly two-thirds getting less than \$1,000 a year. Almost a third earned under \$600.⁴

Earnings of farmers are far lower than earnings of industrial workers. In 1929 when conditions were better than now the average gross income per southern farm family was only \$186 a year; elsewhere in the country it was \$528. "Out of that \$186 southern farmers had to pay all their operating expenses—tools, fertiliser, seed, taxes, and interest on debt—so that only a fraction of that sum was left for the purchase of food, clothes, and the decencies of life."⁵ The average tenant family is in a far worse condition, and more than 50% of the families living on southern farms are tenant families. Cropper families earned from \$38 to \$87 per person according to a study made in 1935. As for farm labourers, the wages are pitifully low, with the highest southern monthly rate in 1929 (North Carolina's) only \$28 a month with board and \$39 without. In South Carolina and Georgia the rates were \$10 lower. They were slashed in half by 1933, and although there has been improvement since, it has not been very great.⁶ What annual earnings actually are we cannot tell from monthly rates. Most farm labourers do not work the full year.

Southern Homes

Both in the country and in the cities the South has much wretched housing. The most common tenant farm home is a one- or two-room cabin with a lean-to for kitchen, or even cooking carried on over an open fireplace. Unpainted, unplastered, no garden, orchard or fence; newspapers frequently used to plaster over the walls,—one means of closing cracks against the chill

dampness of southern winter winds; windows covered by rough board blinds.

The cabins of all croppers and farm labourers are miserable affairs, but coloured croppers always get the worst shacks. Investigators who made a survey of a group of Texas farm families reported a third of the white and nine-tenths of the coloured living in mere shacks.

Because the rooms are few and croppers' families often large, sleeping rooms of necessity are crowded. Both for white and coloured families it is common enough for five and six persons to have to sleep in a single room. In one area, where a count was made, four-fifths of the Negro croppers' and labourers' shacks had not even been provided by the owner with the common decency of a privy, and white croppers not uncommonly suffer in the same way.⁷

In southern cities as in northern there are of course all varieties of housing. Some measure up to the "American standard." But the homes of the poorer workers do not approach any such standard. One estimate has it that three-fourths of our mill workers live in company-owned houses.⁸ It is also usual for miners and steel workers to live "on the patch." Company housing has an unsavoury reputation, despite the publicity given the occasional model mill village. We forget about the "models" when we see the general run. Dirt road running down between row upon row of small frame dwellings, colourless even though painted, monotonously alike from whatever angle viewed. Often no trees, no grass, no green thing to relieve the ugly sameness. "The homes . . . are bare of furniture. Possessions that go to make up the vaunted American standard of living . . . are absent. Rarely does one find running water in the house. The faucet is outside, as is the surface privy."⁹ Some are better than this, to be sure, but others—I quote from a government report—"are woefully lacking in all facilities and offer inadequate shelter."¹⁰

Negro workers' families in cities must live in quarters worse

than those of whites. What Southerner has not seen "acres and acres crowded with tiny shacks on muddy alleys. . . . Shacks without sewerage connexion, below the street level." ¹¹ We have seen the segregated areas of our cities where the poorest Negro workers live—always the most undesirable locations in town, ill-kept streets, buildings in poor repair. Neglect of sanitary provisions in these coloured sections by city governments is proverbial as is exorbitant rents.

In making its report to the President on the South, the National Emergency Council gave startling general estimates on the condition of housing. For example, over one-fourth of the households in cities and towns were found to have no indoor flush toilets, while one-fifth of the farm homes had no toilets at all. In some eight cities in the country at least one-fourth of the houses were in bad condition; most of these were southern cities. In one southern city four out of every ten of its dwellings were found to be badly in need of repairs, with many unfit for human habitation. "By the most conservative estimates, 4,000,000 southern families should be rehoused. This is one-half of all families in the South."

The "Basic Diet"

For food, large numbers of southern families subsist on our notorious "basic diet." It is basic because it keeps life in one's body, although it does not satisfy the appetite. Also it is basic because tens of thousands of labouring people get little else. It ought to be called basic because it lies at the root of much ill health and disease and suffering, and because it is a sign of the poverty-stricken condition of our southern labouring classes.

The "Three M's" we hear this diet called—"meat, meal and molasses." Meat does not mean just any meat: it means "fat back" pork, the cheapest meat of all. It is dealt out to those who must trade at plantation commissaries and company stores. Many labouring people do not earn enough to buy better food.

When the landlord "furnishes" croppers at his plantation store, or has the credit merchant do it, what does he allow? In some places a two-pound sack of meal every two weeks and four pounds of fat back pork. This is a common, widely known practice.¹² Some landlords furnish only corn meal; the cropper must shift for himself to get meat. One estimate has it that about one-third of the rural population of the South lives on this "basic diet."¹³ Workers in the mill villages are likewise doomed to fat meat, molasses and bread as their staple food.¹⁴

Once the bulk of the diet has been made up in this way, a few things may be added. Sweet potatoes are the chief additional item. They too are filling and starchy. Collard greens (a tough, leafy vegetable), turnips and turnip greens, cabbage and cow peas are cheap.* White flour is used whenever it can be substituted for corn meal; canned tomatoes once in a while; milk in very small quantities, if at all; coffee. At the lower levels of income, where live the croppers and farm labourers and also many workers in the mill villages and cities, these additions to the "basic diet" are the most we are apt to find.

Why do not all croppers have at least their own cows, and plant their own little gardens, and raise their own chickens? And workers in mill villages, also, for many of them live under semi-rural conditions? Milk and eggs and green vegetables are what they need. Many families do manage to do this, but a great many do not, and the reasons are commonly recognised. All those in a family old enough to work, whether on the farm or in the mill villages, go to work to "help out." That is usual practice. If they should have a garden, they must put in overtime work after long hours in mill or mine or field. Croppers may not plant a garden unless the landlord consents to the use

* A recent government report refers to four crops that contribute to the family larder of sharecroppers, namely corn for meal, cane for syrup, sweet potatoes and cow peas. "Since these crops are not so marketable as cotton the landlord has no particular interest in financing fertiliser purchases for them and consequently the yields are usually low." (*Landlord and Tenant on the Cotton Plantation*, pp. 101-104.)

of the land for it. They may be required to plant the land in cotton and corn, the crops the owner shares in, right up to the cabin door. The most a cropper generally hopes for is a patch of sweet potatoes he may call his own. As for milk, if croppers cannot even afford to own a mule with which to plough (and a mule would spell a little increased economic independence to the cropper), how could they hope to own a cow?

Poverty and Disease

Wherever poverty is rife, there we find a high infant mortality, widespread disease and ill health.¹⁵ We know that the diseases most characteristic of the South are those that could be cut to a minimum in a year's time if wages were raised to permit proper food and home conditions, and if public measures were taken to provide health education and adequate prevention and care. The large measure of illness and suffering to which southern people are subject is entirely unnecessary.

A high infant death rate was years ago shown to be directly correlated with low income.¹⁶ It is also a sign that public health facilities are inadequate. The infant death rate in our region runs high. With the whole country in 1935 showing 56 deaths per 1,000 live births, all but three southern states showed rates in the 60's or above.¹⁷ Out of every thousand white children in the South under two years of age, 10 die of diarrhoea, while of the Negro children 16 die.¹⁸

As for maternity death rates, the United States has one of the highest among civilised nations,—58 maternal deaths for every 10,000 children born alive in 1935. In 10 southern states maternal deaths were 60, 70, and 80 per 10,000 live births.¹⁹ Medical care for southern mothers, white and Negro, of the poorer classes is glaringly inadequate. Surveying an average rural county of the Carolinas in a typical year, it was learned that the some 700 women having babies received only one-fifth of the medical care they should have had. One-third had no

medical care at all at child-birth. Of 720 babies, 61 died in the first year, and 39 in the second, a total of 100 out of the 720.²⁰

For most of the major diseases, the death rate for southern people is far higher than for northern. Negroes suffer more than whites. High death rates and lack of elementary sanitary and medical facilities go together. Of course workers in the North suffer from poor medical facilities too, but southern workers are the worst off of all.*

Malaria, so prevalent in the South, not only causes suffering to the individual, but more than most diseases it cuts down the earnings of the family and at the same time reduces industrial production. More than 2,000,000 people in the 13 southern states are said to be infected with malaria each year. This alone reduced the annual output of industry by one-third.²¹ We should remember that malaria can be controlled if proper measures are taken.

Pellagra is found hardly at all outside the South. Years ago this disease was shown to be the direct result of a poverty diet lacking in vitamins.²² It involves terrible suffering, sometimes actual mania, often death. There was an increase in the disease

* The following figures represent the number of deaths per 100,000 persons in the population of the southern states in 1929, according to the cause of death. (*American Journal of Public Health, op. cit.*, Table I, group 1, p. 443.)

CAUSE	SOUTHERN		NORTH
	WHITES	NEGROES	
Typhoid, paratyphoid	6.71	15.84	1.74
Malaria	9.98	21.05	0.19
Diphtheria	9.06	5.65	6.12
Influenza, pulmonary	49.12	60.48	24.76
Influenza, other	30.56	48.30	12.71
Dysentery	5.04	7.09	0.89
Tetanus	1.41	3.42	0.75
Tuberculosis, pulmonary	52.87	155.37	64.62
Tuberculosis, other	5.59	15.52	9.04
Pellagra	11.61	39.47	0.28
Syphilis	4.54	34.54	7.66
Gonococcal infection	0.64	2.79	0.82

in depression years. Pellagra increases as poverty and destitution grow. All southern states except two showed an increase between 1925 and 1930.²³

Trachoma, a dangerous eye disease, is another affliction of the poor, found to be widespread in Kentucky, east Tennessee, the western part of Virginia, Arkansas and Oklahoma. Its causes, put bluntly by the U. S. Public Health reports, are poverty, overcrowding, insanitary living conditions, malnutrition.²⁴

Public health work and adequate medical facilities are essential to a community's health. The common people in the South have little chance of being properly cared for when they become ill. The wages of large numbers are hardly enough to provide food, clothing and shelter. How can they afford hospitals, physicians, and nurses, or even to purchase medicines? Moreover, the facilities do not exist for taking care of their needs.²⁵

No more heroic tales of unselfish service can be found than the life stories of many little-known country doctors who give of their skill freely, whether it can be paid for or not. But over-working and under-paying a few unselfish men is no solution. Nor are private charitable agencies ever able to provide more than a fraction of the care needed. When those who suffer most from illness are the low-income classes—and surveys show this to be so—then nothing short of an all-around government program of care and prevention and health education will suffice.²⁶ Only then will the population receive medical attention in accordance with its need. As it is, the degree of ability to pay for doctors, nurses, hospital rooms, medicines, proper diet, determines how much advice and care is received. Those who cannot afford to pay for these things simply go without.

In the Work Place

Until a few years ago, industry in the South was subject to a bare minimum of regulation. The lower paid southern mill

worker went from a home of poverty to a work place where long hours and excessive speed-up prevailed. His work conditions were of a piece with his home conditions. There were Southerners who tried to secure something better. Labour organisations worked for years to improve social welfare laws. So did thousands of liberal men and women in state child labour committees, Leagues of Women Voters, YWCAs, church groups. Working state by state, however, they were able to accomplish relatively little. Southern labour legislation remained in the bottom rank.

Even child labourers were left grossly unprotected. Laws in plenty were proposed, but when they could not be defeated they were made harmless—to the manufacturer.²⁷ Child labour laws were made so limited in their coverage as usually to affect only children in factories and stores. Most states have provided that children shall not work at these occupations until they are 14; some states require work permits for children of 14 and 15. In most states hours of work are limited to 48 a week for children under 16 in factories and stores, and sometimes certain conditions in the work place are regulated, such as toilets, washrooms and work on dangerous machinery.²⁸ But comparing these laws with those in more advanced states, we find how weak most of them are.²⁹ In the short period when NRA codes were in operation, child labour under 16 was prohibited in factories and a few other occupations. Apparently the codes worked with very good effect in our southern states. Yet a chief flaw in all of these measures is their limited scope. At what kinds of work are the great majority of child labourers employed in the South? In domestic service, street trades, canneries, and most of all in agriculture. These are the occupations where the youngest children work, those 6 to 14 years old. All of them are virtually exempt from child labour laws. Occasional local regulations touch on street trades. Canners are flagrantly "exempt." Over domestic service no control whatsoever is exercised. Agriculture, where hundreds of thousands of children work, does not even

have the check that might be put upon it by good rural schools.³⁰

Until the 1930's hours of work, even for women, were very long. Up to 1937 all but four southern states permitted women to work in factories and stores at least 10 hours a day, and from 55 to 60 hours a week. Arkansas, Louisiana and Oklahoma put a limit of 9 hours a day and 54 hours a week; Texas allowed 11 hours in some occupations. North Carolina permitted 11 hours, and South Carolina 12, while Virginia had no limit on its work-week. Alabama and Florida did not regulate the hours of their women at all. Only three states, Arkansas, Louisiana and North Carolina required time out for meals. In the eastern industrial states this is a common requirement.³¹

No southern state laws prohibited night work for women in factories. No southern state is counted among the 17 with minimum wage laws. All the laws have many exceptions and all are poorly enforced. According to one account, Arkansas, Kentucky and Virginia have the best enforcement, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Texas, the poorest.³²

What a sorry sight it is, to see how eagerly southern business organisations utilise the unprotected condition under which women work, when there is the chance of attracting a new industrial enterprise. Thus Chambers of Commerce spoke when a certain northern textile manufacturer in 1929 inquired of them what restrictions he would encounter if he settled in their town. From Spartanburg, South Carolina: "Textile labor in this section works 55 hours a week. Night work operators work five 11-hour days . . . (there) is no competitive bidding (for labor) for the wage scale is uniform (in all plants)." Jackson, Tennessee: "The large industries . . . work 57 hours a week." Columbia, Tennessee: "Labor legislation is favorable to all kinds of industry. There are no minimum laws for females in Tennessee. There are no night laws for females over 16." Goldsboro, North Carolina: "There are no restrictions as to night shifts." Salisbury, North Carolina: ". . . No restrictions as to number of machines operated per worker." Raleigh, North

Carolina: "From the viewpoint of the manufacturer the labor laws in North Carolina are as lenient as any in existence. The law at present allows a 60-hour week and an 11-hour day (for women—no restrictions for men)." ³³

This is the picture of long hours prevailing up to the time of the NRA. It is the story of what happens in southern states when federal pressure is absent. After 1933 many changes came. Agitation for passage of the federal Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 undoubtedly stimulated new state action. South Carolina in 1938 enacted a comprehensive law regulating the hours of labour, not only for women and children, but also for men. The act allows many exceptions and exemptions; yet even so it is a great advance for South Carolina. Also a wage-payment law was passed.* In 1937, North Carolina limited the hours of labour of men to 10 a day and 55 a week, with exemptions, of course. A Louisiana act of 1938 provides an 8-hour day and 48-hour week for women in manufacturing, mechanical, mercantile, telephone and telegraph establishments, laundries, hotels and restaurants. Virginia also improved its laws touching women's work, and Kentucky and Louisiana set up new minimum-wage laws.³⁴ The Fair Labor Standards Act, if it is not cut to pieces, will help to bring southern conditions more nearly into line with those in the North.

There was almost no labour legislation of the social insurance type until passage of the Social Security Act. The United States lagged far behind Great Britain and pre-Nazi Germany in such legislation. Mothers' pension laws and workmen's compensation

* The South Carolina law of 1938 provided a basic limitation on hours for all of 56 a week and 12 a day, applicable to mercantile establishments, public eating places, laundries, dry-cleaning establishments, bakeries, mines, quarries, and other places of manufacture. In certain occupations women may not work more than 40 to 48 hours. Minors under 18 are prohibited from night work. An act of 1936 establishing an 8-hour day and 40-hour week in certain textile mills, was made operative in 1938 by striking out a clause which held it up until similar laws were passed in neighbouring states. However, it still had a clause declaring it was inoperative until a similar law was passed by Congress.

acts were about as far as America went for many years. Mothers' pension laws, designed to render financial assistance to mothers with dependent children who had no means of support, were passed in all but two southern states, but they were often more of a shadow than a reality.⁸⁵ Georgia and South Carolina were without them when the Social Security Act was passed.

Our record on old age pensions, until the Social Security Act changed it, was much worse. Only one state, Kentucky, had an old age pension law, and only one county out of 120 in Kentucky had put the law into practise.⁸⁶

Forty-seven states have accident compensation laws. The one state with no protection against industrial accidents is Mississippi. In Alabama, Louisiana and Tennessee, the law makes no provision for commissions to administer the statutes, which almost amounts to nullification of the acts.⁸⁷ In most states compensation laws include requirements for safety measures, such as guards on dangerous machinery. Below the Mason and Dixon line only Louisiana, Tennessee and Virginia make such requirements. In those states, we are told, enforcement has been so lax that the laws have been freely evaded.

Excessive speed-up and "stretch-out" have in late years become a principal grievance of workers. Under a short work-week they bring hardship enough; if the work-week is long they become extremely harmful. When the machine is speeded up to produce more goods in a given period of time, the human operator must speed up to keep pace. When the number of machines per operator is increased, the human being must "stretch" to cover them. Said a garment manufacturer whose girls had been put on a shorter work-week: "Previously they spent more time in the factory. Now they . . . are kept busy from the time they come into the plant until it is time to go home."⁸⁸

The system of stretch-out is best known to workers in textile mills. It was described by a committee of the United States Senate which investigated its effects in the South, as "a system of compelling the workers to operate several additional machines

without commensurate compensation." A South Carolina legislative committee called it a plan for "putting more work on the employees than they can do."³⁹

Conditions of extreme "stretching" were reported to the Senate investigating committee of 1929. There were instances of weavers stretched from 30 to 40 looms, and then to 48; of others from 40-odd to 96; of still others from 26 to 72. Meantime wages were cut. Said one witness before the Committee about a certain group of weavers, "Their average weekly pay before and after the stretch-out was \$18, which is equivalent to twice as much work without any increase in pay."⁴⁰

A government expert reported that by 1929 "Automatic features are . . . being added to this super-machinery, so that now instead of a weaver operating 30 or 36 looms as was true only a few years ago, plants are built now in banks of 90, 100, 110, and I have been informed of one mill where a weaver is expected to look after 118 looms."⁴¹ Between 1923 and 1932, according to one estimate, not less than one-half of the mills in the entire textile industry tried to increase weaving job assignments by the stretch-out or some similar system. There were similar increases in job assignments for jobbing and spinning.⁴²

Speed-up and stretch-out, so well-known in textile mills, have gone a long way in other industries too. Everywhere the attempt has been made to extract more product per worker and hence reduce labour costs.

To condemn speed-up and stretch-out is by no means to oppose technological progress. But to give workers more machines to tend, and force them through economic need to tend more, is nothing of which management can be very proud. On the other hand, increase in productivity by the improvement of machines could be of vast benefit to all concerned provided this were used to shorten the working day and increase the workers' wages. If greater productivity were sought in order to raise the general standard of living of the mass of people, if improvements in machines were made the means of lessening the

burden of human toil, then workers would have reason to welcome, not fear technological changes.

As it is, unless strong labour organisation is there to protect them, speed-up and stretch-out take little account of the human beings involved. Labour organisation in the South so far has been able to give very little protection against excessive work.

Schools of the Poor

Even when it comes to the schools, that basic service a democracy is supposed to render equally to all, regardless of class or any other distinction, the South presents a picture of serious retardation. For some children and in some localities this is not true. But if one is a visitor to the South and asks to be shown all the schools he will begin to understand.

The conditions the stranger would find are an old story to informed Southerners. There are good schools in the South. Those who come from comfortable city homes may attend public schools whose standards in equipment and length of school term, if not in teachers' salaries and training, would stand up beside the better schools of the North. Even some of the schools in working class neighbourhoods have been greatly improved. Improvements made for coloured children in some cities are commendable. Goaded by a little band of persistent southern liberals who have rendered admirable support to Negro organisations, a number of communities throughout the different states have set about bettering coloured schools.

Creditable though all this is, however, it still remains true that poor schools are more common. The bulk of southern children, the underprivileged millions, must still go to schools inadequate in plant and equipment, they must be taught by teachers who are miserably underpaid, and in many small towns and many areas of the open country they must go for school terms so short as to make even a bare elementary education almost impossible. So common are these conditions that even when

the good schools are averaged in with the bad, we still rank far at the bottom of the list.

We ranked far below other sections in teachers' salaries. All the southern states but Oklahoma averaged below \$1,000 before depression cuts (1929-1930). In the nation the average was \$1,420. In Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Mississippi and South Carolina, teachers averaged less than \$800.⁴³ Teachers of white children commonly earned a little over \$1,000, counting all southern states.* For coloured teachers the average was half that amount. In nine states, it was even less. Georgia struck bottom; its general run of coloured teachers received no more than \$260 a year.⁴⁴

The best northern schools are open 185 days in the year, and none run less than 160 days. Not so in our southern states. In Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Mississippi, South Carolina, and Texas the school term by last reports was 150 days or less. For Negro children it was much shorter. It is an accepted fact that in cotton picking season schools close down.⁴⁵

Much less is spent on our school systems per capita of population than in northern states. With some northern states expending as much as \$25 and \$30 per capita, and with \$18.79 as the northern average, none of our states down South exceed \$14 per capita, and in some it is \$8 and \$9.⁴⁶

The Negro people form a fourth of the southern population but receive only a little more than a tenth of the total spent on the schools. In Mississippi and South Carolina, where something like half of the population is coloured, only one-tenth of public school appropriations go to Negro schools. In 1932, over a million young Negroes in the southern states were unable to go to school. As each year of the economic crisis passed, the number excluded increased. Again in 1938 there began talk of curtailing the schools.⁴⁷

* I have purposely used figures to show conditions before the long depression had done its work. After 1930 state and local budgets for education declined and conditions became very much worse.

In spite of the gravest handicaps, the Negro population has overcome the main part of its illiteracy, a burden inherited from the days of chattel slavery. At that time only one in twenty could read and write, to-day it is four out of five.⁴⁸

Taken altogether our schools have fallen so far behind the general level of American education that it is a real problem how such serious deficiencies can be made up.

The "Backward" South

The deplorable human situation that we find in the South could have been much improved by better schools, adequate public health measures, stronger labour laws. We have been deprived of many of the minimum social provisions that in other states have come to be taken for granted. The little we have secured has only been by dint of hard work year in and year out on the part of southern labour and liberal groups. But more often than not their efforts have come to naught. While other sections moved far ahead, we have seen the South drag along far in the rear.

One obstacle holding us back has certainly been the region's poverty. Schools in America, no matter how poor the locality, have had to depend entirely upon local and state taxes for their support. So have public health and other social services. Taxable property in the South in 1935 was on the average only \$463 per capita as compared with \$1,370 in the Northeast. We have more than a fourth of the nation's people living in the South, but income taxes paid into the national treasury amounted in 1936 to less than one-eighth of the total.

Beside being poor, the South has proportionately a far heavier burden to carry. Dixie is a land of the old and the young. The most productive group, embracing men and women between 20 and 40 years of age, is disproportionately small, principally because many of them migrate to other sections in search of better economic opportunities. The southern birthrate is higher

than that of other sections. Consequently there are more children to support and send to school. In 1930 the southern states had six children to every ten adults as compared to four children to every ten adults in the North. The rural South carries the heaviest burden of all coupled with the greatest poverty. Something like four and a quarter million children of school age have to be cared for in southern rural areas which can claim only 2% of the nation's income. At the other extreme is the non-rural Northeast. It has twice as many children of school age, but to educate them it has 20 times as much income as the rural South.⁴⁹

Yet to lay the whole problem at the door of our poverty would be less than candid. Why is it that we cannot raise sufficient taxes to meet our pressing human needs? One reason lies in the domination of southern economic life by absentee owners. So says the report on the South by the National Emergency Council. Most of the region's wealth is being drained off in the form of interest and dividends by outside interests. They take away from the South what should be its main sources of revenue. Hence, we are told southern states have resorted to sales taxes. In all but one, sales taxes comprise at least 59% of the public revenue; in no northern state that has a sales tax does it bring in more than 44%, and in most of them much less.

We begin to get nearer an understanding of southern "backwardness" from the National Emergency Council's report concerning attempts at tax reform. "The efforts of southern communities to increase their revenue and to spread the tax burden more fairly have been impeded by the vigorous opposition of interests outside the region which control much of the South's wealth."

But southern states have not come to depend on sales taxes merely because their sources of revenue are limited by absentee ownership. Nor do outside interests offer the only opposition to more equitable forms of taxation. They comprise one wing.

The opposition which liberal Southerners know most intimately, which they meet face to face whenever they go down to the state capital to fight sales taxes and to push labour and other public welfare measures, is the opposition of the southern business interests.

Poor though the South may be, far more progress could have been made. It is the opposition to progress, the obstacles put in the way of all labour and welfare reforms, that has held the South back. In the last analysis the real seat of this opposition is in the North. It draws its main strength from the great financial centres to whose interest it is to keep southern standards low. They have the power to make their opposition felt in every nook and corner of the South. I would not wish to minimise it. But so do southern business interests oppose welfare measures. They have great local influence and prestige which should not be underrated. Written into the history of labour legislation in the South is their organised effort to block and undermine child labour legislation, to cut down school appropriations, to fight laws designed to protect women workers. All this they have done when measures have come up in the states. They have presented the same unyielding opposition where federal welfare measures were involved: Opposition to federal child labour legislation, opposition to wages and hours provisions of the NRA, opposition to the attempts at a wages and hours bill in Congress. We shall see in succeeding pages the lengths to which this same opposition has gone to prevent labour organisation in the South. There are individuals in the business class who take an enlightened stand, who do not join with their fellows to fight labour measures, but unfortunately they are exceptions.

Not until the New Deal brought federal measures was progress in the South speeded up. Nothing less than Congressional action could break through the combined strength of northern and southern financial interests which for so long had held back welfare measures for the South. What was done

under the New Deal should have been done long ago, and should be carried further. The federal government through federal legislation and federal taxes should help out the South. It is no fault of the southern people that they are at so grave a disadvantage in financing large-scale public services. They literally cannot get at the owners of their wealth. What could be more just than steeper income taxes on large incomes by the federal government, to help the neediest schools in America, the neediest social services? The South would certainly rate a very large share. Why should not the corporations and individuals who drain out of the region so much of its wealth, be called upon to pay at least some of it back again in this highly beneficial form of education and other public services? It would be only a fair return to the common people of the South, who after all have been the main sufferers from this absentee ownership.

CHAPTER V. CIVIL LIBERTY

The South's deplorable conditions could not have continued year after year if popular groups had been allowed free exercise of their constitutional civil liberties. Working people by organised effort have sought changes, but under most stifling handicaps. Violations of the civil rights of organised labour present the most critical problem. Antedating and undergirding opposition to organised labour, are many practices involving the individual, permitted by law and custom, which in effect are shockingly repressive.

Of the latter, there is the notoriously strong bias against the poor man common in the everyday administration of police and courts. How does it show itself? In one year, 1933, no less than 41% of all persons committed to county and city jails (including chain gangs) in the southern states were sent there for non-payment of fines. The total was some 66,000 persons.¹ In well over two-thirds of these cases the offence was so slight that the fine imposed was under \$20. This can mean but one thing. The persons fined were workers or the poorest farmers. Who else but they cannot raise a small sum of \$5, \$10, or \$15 to keep themselves out of jail? Arrested on minor charges—it may be alleged infringement of a petty local ordinance,—often with no lawyer to advise or defend them, they are fined by the court. If they cannot pay, they may be sentenced to work off the fine and court costs in jail or on the chain gang.²

The horrors of the chain gang have been widely exposed in recent years. Legislative investigations, the press and motion pictures have laid bare a penal system as cruel and uncivilised

as could well be imagined.³ Food, sleeping quarters (sometimes cages) and hours of work on the chain gang are generally indescribably bad. These conditions are made many times worse by the character of the guards employed and the methods of punishment permitted. Criminologists oppose such treatment even for the most hardened criminals. It is intolerable treatment for persons who are condemned to "work off" a fine for a minor offence.

Some dent has been made on this bad situation.⁴ The chain gang has gone out in some states. Reforms have been instituted in others. Labour and liberal groups have worked for abolition of the chain gang for years. Georgia has been the scene of the most recent reforms. Chains in prisons and certain other extreme abuses allegedly have been abolished.

Some southern states have the offensive fee system, a sure breeder of injustice. "There are said to be more convicts per capita in Alabama than in any state in the nation . . . [a condition] widely credited to the so-called 'fee system' whereby sheriffs and clerks of courts receive a fee ranging from \$3 to \$5 in connection with the arrest and conviction of persons charged with misdemeanours."⁵

In all states the practice of using vagrancy laws indiscriminately against working people is found. Presumably the term "vagrant" refers to a person likely to be a charge on the community because he has no means of livelihood and no funds. Little attention may be paid to these distinctions. In time of strike "vagrancy" is a common charge, together with "disorderly conduct" and "disturbing the peace," under which strikers have been hauled into court and even sent off to jail. In cotton-picking season police have been known to arrest coloured workers, who allegedly are "roaming around town doing nothing," with a jail term threat held over them if they do not go to the cotton fields to work.⁶

Why is it that the common man is habitually the butt of perversion and bias in law and courts? What is the end result of

the victimisation of the poor? Is it not a fact that any kind of check upon the labourer's freedom of movement, whether it be by law or by police intimidation, places labour at that much more of a disadvantage in seeking its due? Is it not inevitable that such conditions as these would engender an acute sense of insecurity among labouring people, even in those who have not themselves been victimised? When these conditions are common, as they are with us, we cannot doubt the special rôle they play. In such circumstances, it is unquestionably easier for industry to maintain sub-standard wages and living conditions, such as southern labour has suffered all these years.

The Hazardous Position of the Negro

We know that these conditions bear down with special weight upon the Negro. It was to exercise some control over coloured labour that "false pretence" laws were originally devised. Peonage on the plantations, hangover from slavery that it is, applies to Negroes almost exclusively.⁷ Both white and Negro workers have been subjected to forced labour in lumber and turpentine camps.

As for our courts and police and county sheriffs, what Southerner does not know the kind of justice proverbially dealt out to the coloured man? It is a by-word, even in the South. There are judges who are notable exceptions, men who try to uphold the rule that the more weak and helpless the victim, the more care should be exercised to see that no wrong be done him. But surely many are men holding all the traditional southern views, not excluding the traditional view toward the Negro. Having such a bias, how could they fail to carry it over into the administration of their public duties?

So it is that Negro workers are far more liable than are whites to be picked up on "vagrancy" charges and shunted off to jail. Being poorer as well as discriminated against, they suffer far

more than do white workers by imprisonment for non-payment of fine.

It is not unknown for fantastic sentences to be laid upon a Negro for such petty acts as theft of a few dollars in value, or even a misdemeanour. A Negro in Atlanta, Georgia, was sentenced to 12 to 15 years in prison for stealing a watch and 55 cents. Another Negro in Georgia was sentenced to the chain gang for stealing a pig from a wealthy white planter, who, it was said, "stole much of his money from worthy Georgia's women and children." Local newspapers protested this sentence, one calling it a "stench and a disgrace." In De Kalb County, Georgia, in 1930, a Negro was sent to the chain gang for 20 years for stealing a ham. The *Moultrie Observer* plainly said that only a poor man and a Negro would get such a sentence. In 1926 a Negro woman of Richmond, Virginia, was sentenced to 30 years in the penitentiary when she pleaded guilty to forgery on three indictments. For each count she got 10 years. The total amount of her theft was \$185.⁸

This extremely hazardous position in which the coloured person finds himself was never more dramatically revealed than in the famous Scottsboro case. Here were nine young boys, utterly unknown and friendless, whose case yet became a *cause célèbre* throughout the world. Of the nine boys none was more than 21 years old, and one was as young as 12. They were not different from a million other youths of their age and economic class and colour, not a few of whom like these were also out of work and seeking jobs. One day these particular boys were pulled from a freight train by railroad guards and landed in a jail in Scottsboro, Ala. They were then accused of rape. At first the accusation was made by two white girls who were also riding on the freight train in the company of two white boys, but later one of the girls completely repudiated her testimony and even went into court to declare it false. The case against the Negro boys, tried again and again, has been shown to the satisfaction of many disinterested observers to have no basis in fact, and in

1937, after six years in prison, four of the youths convicted on the same evidence as had been the other five, were unconditionally released by the Alabama courts.⁹ There could hardly be better testimony to the innocence of all.

In the course of time this case received support from a wide group of labour, liberal and left-wing organisations, though at first it was largely financed and publicised through the International Labor Defense. In the state of Alabama itself a courageous group of liberal Southerners formed a committee to push the defence and see justice done. Numerous southern editors, ministers and educators expressed their belief that the nine youths were innocent.

Why did Scottsboro become so widely known? Why did Negro groups especially watch its outcome so anxiously? With the innocence of these Negro boys so apparent, was it not their very helplessness, so typical, that gave their case its meaning? Scottsboro became the cause it did because it dramatised to liberal minds outside the South the world of discrimination in which the southern Negro lives. In supporting the Scottsboro case they felt they were doing something about those conditions.

Perhaps there is an additional element in Scottsboro. These Negro youths were accused of rape. They were convicted and sentenced to death amidst a tense and threatening white public. One of them, until recently, was still under sentence to the electric chair, four others to virtual life imprisonment. Alleged rape is the ground on which the infamous crime of lynching is repeatedly committed by southern mobs. The lynch evil did not arise in this case, but the rape accusation did. In some sense Scottsboro aroused the deepest grievance that the Negro people have, and that liberal opinion everywhere holds against the South.

It is not easy for some white Southerners to rid themselves of the indoctrinated notion that lynchings are the spontaneous reaction of outraged white manhood against attacks by Negroes on white women. One even finds some Northerners clinging to this idea. The evidence shows that lynchings are nothing of

the kind. It is true enough that most persons lynched are Negroes. But contrary to general opinion, only a small proportion of persons lynched are even accused of rape. Most estimates put the number at about one-sixth of the total lynchings over a period of 40-odd years.¹⁰

This means therefore that more than 3,000 of the 3,794 lynchings that were reported for the 13 southern states between 1882 and 1936 were for other alleged crimes than rape.¹¹ The truth is that often the murdered man may not have committed any crime at all, or only a petty offence. In some cases he is accused of having shot a white man. But the way to deal with that is for the courts to try him for murder, not for a mob to take it into its own hands to put the Negro to death by this most hideous and debasing means. Once a mob is on the loose, anything can and does happen. It is as likely as not to pick a victim without any care as to his guilt or innocence.

As the figures on lynching show, we must look beyond the alleged crimes for which Negroes are put to death to explain why the practice of lynching developed in the South.

Nothing took stronger grip on those who determined southern norms after Reconstruction than that the white man should rule and the Negro be held at an inferior status. That this feeling was violently emotional and showed itself in elaborate theories of Anglo-Saxon superiority might lead us astray as to whence it came. Because of this superstructure we tend to lose sight of the basic fact of how the Negro was used originally and how he is used to-day. Although we know well enough that the whole southern economy was based upon getting the cheapest possible labour supply and that the landlords acted accordingly, we tend to forget that it usually takes force to accomplish this. Historically, certainly, wherever there has been suppression of a whole people, violent means in addition to the regular channels of courts and law have been employed to maintain the suppressive relationship. This is true until a vigorous counter-move arises to prevent it. Those who use lynch law

do not have to be conscious of these underlying causes. It is enough that southern mores have been such as to permit them to fly off at the lynchers' basely emotional tangent, that southern communities have been ready to accept the lynchers' flimsy excuses for the commission of each gross act. The undertone is always there, however, and it even comes to the surface in so many words: "We must keep the Negro in his place."

On this question of lynching, southern liberal opinion has been outspoken for a number of years; it condemns the practice unequivocally as a crime. Many Southerners advocate a federal anti-lynching law. Southern white women, moreover, have led this fight. For years certain church groups, and women drawn together by the Interracial Commission, and now a Southwide organisation, the "Association of Southern White Women for the Prevention of Lynching," have said in the plainest words to southern white men that they are utterly opposed to lynching. They insist that white men join the women in putting an end to such inexcusable mob violence. Nor are the women alone in their stand. Outstanding southern newspapers have spoken out against lynching and endorsed the principle of a federal law to deal with it.¹² Indeed a poll by the American Institute of Public Opinion in 1937 found in answer to the question, "Should Congress enact a law which would make lynching a federal crime?" that 65% of the southern votes said "Yes."¹³

The Issue of Jim Crow

Scottsboro dramatised to many minds the general condition of the Negro people in the South. Not only lynching, but disfranchisement and segregation, or what the sociologists nowadays like to call the southern caste system. It is a caste system, we must admit, rigid and inhumane, differing little from those which many a sincere southern Christian missionary has gone out to so-called heathen lands to change.

The question of the ballot I shall treat in later pages, because

of the central issue it has become to-day in the rising struggle for abolition of the poll tax. Related to it is jury service. Jury service has peculiar point for the coloured man because of the bias against his race in southern courts. Exclusion from jury service on account of colour is of course unconstitutional. The Supreme Court has so ruled in several notable decisions. Scottsboro was one of the most important. The most recent decision was written by Justice Hugo Black in 1939. Pioneer work in bringing cases before the Supreme Court has been done by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. A strong sentiment has been growing in the South itself for rooting out this discriminatory practice. Here and there in important cases more care is now being taken by southern officials to observe the letter of the law. I cannot say as much for its spirit. For in dealing with the thousand and one unimportant cases the battle is hardly begun.

When it comes to segregation, what can we say? We cannot escape the fact. Discrimination against the Negro goes on in the North too. I could tell of many flagrant cases within my own knowledge. But there it is usually a matter of custom and hence easier to break down. In the South the Negro people, by both law and custom, are segregated, are treated as "inferior," are set apart from the white population, and in consequence suffer indignities of many kinds. That this flouts our country's most cherished civil liberties goes without saying. That the psychological, economic and social environment it provides, constitutes a hardship to which no people, and above all no growing child, should be subjected, is painfully true.

What then? All will agree that the problem has no overnight solution. Nor do I for a moment minimise the difficulties confronting us. They are no less real to people because they are man-made and hence subject to change. Also, the whole question is so steeped in emotion, so hedged about by feelings of southern tradition and loyalty, that many will not even listen if it is raised.

Leaving aside here the question of ultimate solutions, it is certain that some things can be done here and now to improve the situation. Much is going on already that in sum total effect is beginning to modify the rigours of Jim Crow. This is an area of progressive effort for which Southerners are given all too little credit.

The Interracial Commission movement may be extremely cautious in its program and procedures, but it has most certainly had a wholesome influence on many middle class southern minds that it has touched. It is responsible for many attempts to make less harsh the rule of Jim Crow. It has worked for improvement in the condition of railroad coaches allotted to coloured people, the introduction of better sanitation in the segregated areas of cities, the securing of larger appropriations for coloured schools, the investigation of cases of ill-treatment by white policemen of coloured citizens. In bringing about improvements of this kind, both Negro and white citizens have sat down together in the interracial commissions to work them out. So much is gain.

Similarly in the student interracial commissions and summer conferences, sponsored usually by YWCAs and YMCAs, an educational process has gone on which in time overrides many taboos that have stood in the way of co-operative work and friendly understanding between southern coloured and white youth.

Of outstanding effect is the contribution made by trade unions where coloured workers are admitted on a par with white. There are southern locals of mine, steel and maritime workers, and also of sharecroppers, who find themselves quite simply forgetting in their union meetings the unwritten and even the written law requiring separate seating. Common economic problems are uppermost in their minds. When they elect coloured workers as well as white to hold office in the union, we see them beginning to judge men by their competence to do a job, not by the colour of their skin. If there were space it would be

possible to cite instance after instance of this kind of new working relationship. Be it said that when taboos are forgotten, it is purely and simply because they prevent workers from carrying on effective trade union work. The object of the trade union being economic protection, southern workers are slowly coming to see how shortsighted it is to let artificial barriers like Jim Crow deprive them of the obvious benefits that united trade unions can bring.

Note also the work of the organisations of Negroes themselves. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, with many branches in the southern states, has long been active in bringing civil liberty issues before the public and winning wide support. Frequently it has taken questions of segregation, jury service and similar matters to the courts, in some cases winning favourable decisions. The National Urban League has also been prominent, especially in the labour field. In 1936 the National Negro Congress was formed. In it have come together many different coloured organisations, labour, fraternal, church, youth, every type and kind. The membership in its affiliated groups totals nearly three million. The Congress program is very broad, touching every aspect of the Negro people's life. Similar to it in aim is the Southern Negro Youth Congress. We can expect these organisations of Negro membership, and I have mentioned only a few national groups, to play an increasing rôle in placing before the nation the whole question of the Negro's civil needs and rights.

Political Minorities

Political minorities have suffered more repressive measures in the South than in most other parts of the nation. In many communities left-wing parties have not been allowed to function. Brutal maltreatment of individuals has been resorted to again and again.

Many will recall the harrowing Shoemaker, Poulnot and

Rogers case. In Tampa, Fla., in 1935, these three men were taken out by night, stripped and flogged mercilessly, and their bleeding wounds smeared with hot tar. Shoemaker died.¹⁴ Wherein had they "offended"? They were Socialists, seeking to organise a new progressive political party to be called the Modern Democrats. Also they had been active in work among the unemployed.

In the neighbouring state of Georgia a young Negro Communist, Angelo Herndon, had engaged in similar activity—organising the unemployed. In 1932 at the age of 19 years, he led an orderly march of a thousand white and coloured unemployed under the auspices of the local Unemployed Council, to the county commissioners of Atlanta to ask for relief. The relief, admittedly needed by these people, was granted. But a few days later Herndon was arrested and charged with "attempting to incite insurrection," under an old statute resurrected a short time before, dating from slavery days.¹⁵

Labour and liberal groups throughout the United States and in foreign countries came to support the case. Herndon's sentence of 18 to 20 years on the chain gang, was seen as a threat to all labour. Several other persons had previously been arrested under the "insurrection law."

Held 27 months in Atlanta's Fulton Tower while his first appeal was pending, Herndon was finally released upon payment of the seemingly impossible bail, for labour groups, of \$15,000 cash. Twice the case went to the Supreme Court. In its second decision in 1937 the Court virtually annulled Georgia's "insurrection law," and Herndon was freed.

Beginning about 1935 changes could be seen. In certain places where hitherto suppression had been extreme, the rights of free speech and assemblage, even to Communists, were to some extent granted.

In 1936 the Communist candidate for president, Earl Browder, spoke at a public meeting in Birmingham, Ala. (Shortly thereafter in Tampa his hall was padlocked against him and he was prevented from speaking.) James Ford, the

Negro Communist candidate for vice-president, was allowed the use of radio time in Durham, N. C., during the campaign. Workers Bookshops were opened in several southern cities. A Federal Court in New Orleans, La., declared in the case of a foreign-born worker from Oklahoma that his former membership in the Communist Party was not ground for deportation. In 1938, Communist Party conventions were held in Virginia, Tennessee and Alabama.

These events were significant for much more than the extension of civil rights to a left-wing group. Taken in conjunction with the general development of labour organisation, they demonstrate an axiom long familiar to labour—that the treatment of left-wing organisations is an unfailing barometer of the general state of civil liberty. While southern left-wing groups had their constitutional liberties to some extent respected, all labour organisations could feel their liberties increasingly secure. But let the time come when radical groups are set upon, then all labour organisations, even the most conservative, sooner or later must expect attacks.

The Right of Labour to Organise

In the nature of our times the gains we make to-day are in danger of being lost to-morrow unless we are vigilant. Labour must expect to live thus insecurely, at least until everywhere in the nation workers have won an assured freedom to organise in unions of their own choosing. That time has not come yet, in the South least of all. The determined attacks upon the National Labor Relations Act in 1939, the attempts supported by chambers of commerce, manufacturers' associations and employer interests generally, to amend the Act in such ways as to deprive it of all its effectiveness, should be a sufficient warning of labour's still precarious position.

Harlan County, Kentucky, will ever remain the classic case in America of the violent suppression of workers' attempts to

unionise. The whole of this incredible story was uncovered by the Senate civil liberties committee, of which Senator LaFollette was chairman. An official state investigation once termed what went on in Harlan a "reign of terror."¹⁶ We cannot be surprised when we learn from the Senate committee's investigation the kind of men who were deputised. Of those who were made deputies between 1934 and 1937, 37 had served sentences in the State reformatory, four had been sentenced for murder, 14 for manslaughter, three for malicious shooting with intent to kill, the others had been in prison for robbery, burglary, and grand larceny. Among the deputies were three who had served sentences in federal prisons. These men, "convicted or indicted for homicide and other crimes were commissioned, armed with guns, and sent out into the county 'to preserve the peace.'"¹⁷ We learn that the grip the companies had upon the county was complete. They owned the stores, the medical services—which some made profits from,—the ground on which the villages stood. Even the roadways into some towns were the property of the companies, and in some cases had gates with locks on them or guards to keep out any unwanted visitor. The companies cherished their privileges. In 1936 they successfully opposed state legislation that would have corrected some of the abuses such as company scrip, company doctors, and the right of coal companies to employ deputy sheriffs as private guards.¹⁸ In a county where employers were fighting labour organisations with great determination, the citizens had to depend for their police protection, except for the sheriff himself, upon deputies who were paid by the companies. Most of the citizens of the county were miners and their families. Again and again the miners tried to organise. They were victimised, beaten, threatened with extreme reprisals. It took a strong combination of circumstances —federal investigation, federal action, appearance of the CIO—before the right of the miners to organise was conceded by the employers, and violence against the miners ceased. On August 19, 1938, the Harlan County Coal Operators Association for

the first time signed an agreement with the United Mine Workers of America. There was a recurrence of conflict in 1939, but it too finally ended in a written agreement.

Harlan is the most notorious of many instances. In mill villages, steel and mining towns, and sometimes even in industrial towns not directly owned by corporations, there have been periods, short or long, when civil rights for labour have been virtually non-existent.¹⁹

In a different category, but with the same aim of labour intimidation, is violence against individuals whose labour activities are objected to. The case of Joseph Gelders is typical.²⁰ Gelders, a native of Alabama, and for some years a teacher at the State university, laid himself open to attack by investigating violations of the civil rights of workers, which at the time were of frequent occurrence in Alabama. He had looked into the case of a young radical who had been arrested under a local anti-syndicalist ordinance and sent to the chain gang. (The ordinance was later declared unconstitutional.) Gelders was set upon one night in the streets of Birmingham by three armed men, thrown into a car, cruelly and dangerously beaten, driven out into the country, beaten further, and left unconscious and helpless. His story is recorded in hearings before the Senate civil liberties committee.

Southern public opinion—and there is one that is outraged by such lawless acts,—was outspoken on the Gelders case. The *Birmingham Age-Herald* with cartoons, news articles and editorials, urged investigation and prosecution of the floggers. The *Post and News* of Birmingham protested against the treatment of him as did the *Dothan Eagle* and *Montgomery Advertiser*.

Labour recognised the intent of the attack and took action to prevent other outrages. It set up a permanent committee whose duty it was to investigate such incidents. William Mitch, then President of the Alabama State Federation of Labor and head of the United Mine Workers of America in the Birmingham district, was chairman of the committee.²¹

Although Gelders positively identified at least two of his attackers, no convictions resulted. Two grand juries met and returned no bills.²²

The most up-to-date method of "union busting" is by the use of professional spies recruited from regular industrial spy agencies. From the investigations of the Senate civil liberties committee we have a documentary record of industrial espionage in American industry. Corporations have paid out millions of dollars to spy agencies to try to break up trade unions in their plants. They use spies to stir up dissension in the unions, to inform employers of union plans, to provoke violence among the workers.²³ The spies may be local workers "hooked" into this degenerating work; or they may be long experienced agents directly from the spy companies.

Between 1933 and 1937, the Pinkerton agency alone had industrial spies operating as members of some 12 international unions in five leading southern cities. This is shown by the files of the Senate civil liberties committee. We shall probably never know the full amount of the sums spent by industrial corporations for espionage, munitions and strikebreaking, but the committee was able to unearth some part of the expenditures. The 27 firms listed for the South spent nearly \$800,000 from 1933 to 1937. This by no means included all the companies known to employ such spy agencies, for in many cases records could not be found when the committee began to investigate. In the committee's list of companies gleaned from such records of the detective agencies as could still be found, some 78 southern firms are named, 20 of them textile concerns, and six of them large oil corporations. Steel corporations were also listed.²⁴

For a classic example of spy activity one should read the story told to the Senate civil liberties committee by one Lyle Leteer, "undercover agent" for the Pinkerton agency in General Motor's Chevrolet plant in Atlanta, Georgia.²⁵ As

a Pinkerton operative in 1934 and 1935, Leteer attained important offices in the local union, made daily reports of union activities, won access to all the union records and copied them for Pinkerton's. Indeed, he played his part so well that the company once dropped him along with other union workers, and the union almost made his a test case of discrimination against the union.

Special other means are used for intimidating and dividing the ranks of trade unionists. The "red scare" is a favoured trick. Its objective is to frighten the workers, to discredit their leadership, and to arouse community antagonism against the union. The Senate civil liberties committee has furnished us a classic description of this notorious device.

Raising the "red" scare is a common practice with detective agencies, not because of any profoundly felt fear of radicalism among employers, but more because the identification of labor with radicalism and sabotage neatly serves their anti-labor policy. Radicalism is more opprobrious than labor-unionism; therefore, the employer opposed to unions is more than anxious to plead his cause in public by stigmatizing all unions as radical. This type of reasoning places an initial handicap on the organizing campaigns of unions from which only the hardest can survive.²⁶

Blacklisting is used to intimidate. It has been common practice following strikes that are lost. When the general textile strike of 1934 was ended no agreement was made to protect strikers against discrimination. A few weeks after the strike the union reported discrimination by some 363 mills involving no less than 25,000 workers. Weeks after a defeated textile strike at Ware Shoals, South Carolina, in 1929, some 200 men were reported "blacklisted and unable to find work." Union coal miners have repeatedly been the victims of blacklisting, especially in notorious Harlan County.²⁷ If the National Labor Relations Act is left unmolested it should furnish some protection against the abuse.

Religious and especially racial differences are played upon. This is a potent weapon in the hands of southern employers. When Negro and white workers show a solid front, attempts, clever and crude, are frequently made to undermine their organisation by appealing to old antagonisms and arousing distrust. Here is where the various vigilante organisations like the Ku Klux Klan may be called in. If community sentiment can thereby be whipped up against the union, especially if the workers are out on strike, the employers have scored a major victory.²⁸

Breaking Strikes

The South may be backward in some things, but not in the knowledge of strikebreaking technique. Anti-union employers were often successful in our section where trade union organisation up to recent years was very weak.

In exceptional cases the employer may give in as soon as the workers walk out. But that is not the usual course of events in the South. A weak labour movement is not a power with which companies feel compelled to negotiate. Every kind of strategy known to break strikes has been used against southern labour.

The striking workers' picket line has always been a focal point of attack. If it can be broken up, strikebreakers can be got into the mill. A key move in company strategy has been to give the appearance of continuing operations. This discourages the strikers and weans away community support. The picket line is attacked. Company lawyers are sent to the courts to get injunctions against picketing—frequently with marked success. Agents are despatched for either local or imported strikebreakers. Armed company guards may be installed. Police, militia, the sheriff and his deputies—any and all of these armed forces of the government may be called out. If local and state officials are men out of sympathy with labour unions, for employers to get police and militia is easy. From then on it is a

matter of when and how best to smash the picket line, of how much force to use.

Court injunctions have been issued against picketing in almost all recent strikes of any size in the South. They were granted against 4,000 Dan River mill strikers (Danville, Virginia) in 1930; against more than a thousand Marion, North Carolina, textile strikers in 1929; against steel workers in the Birmingham area in 1934; against stove and range workers in Rome, Georgia, in 1935; against longshoremen on strike in different ports in 1935, and against the several branches of maritime workers in their strikes of 1936-37. How powerful a weapon in breaking the strike the injunction may prove depends upon its terms. If it places extreme restrictions upon picketing and upon the general activities of the strikers, as so many injunctions do, then of itself the injunction can almost defeat the strike.²⁹

The rôle of police and militia, armed company guards and strikebreakers has often been decisive. During the great textile strike of 1934, troops and police operated on a wholesale scale. In one Georgia town police were arresting strikers "in large batches." In one North Carolina village, machine guns, armed strikebreakers, even gas, were stored in the mill. One South Carolina mill city was reported to have deputised 50 men and armed them with machine guns, Winchester rifles and shot-guns. From numbers of places came reports of the arming of strikebreakers. Little wonder, with preparations such as these, that violence took place everywhere.

From Augusta, the *New York Times* carried the news that three strikers were shot by police on the picket line; other pickets were slugged and dispersed with guns. Five pickets including four women were injured in Greenville, South Carolina. At Honea Path, in the same state, news reports said strikebreakers were armed and deputised; they opened fire on an advancing picket line of unarmed men and women and continued to fire even when the pickets turned and ran. Six strikers were killed upon that occasion, some of them shot in the back.

Governor Eugene Talmadge of Georgia set up a detention camp where arrested strikers were held; 140 were reported interned there at one time. In North Carolina 18 strikers were sentenced to from 60 to 90 days on the chain gang. So freely was the militia used against strikers that in the Carolinas alone over 50 units of National Guardsmen were called out.³⁰

During the famous Marion, North Carolina, textile strike (1929) a sheriff and his deputies fired into a demonstration of strikers, killing five workers and wounding 19. Yet it was four strikers who were convicted by the court for "rioting."³¹ At a strike at Ware Shoals, South Carolina, in the same year two companies of the National Guard made the picket line impotent, and the mill was able to reopen.³²

When 12,000 coal miners struck in the Birmingham area in 1934, deputies opened fire on a picket line, killing a Negro striker and wounding a white worker. Nearby pickets for 8,000 striking ore miners were also fired upon, and four coloured miners were killed. In both conflicts many pickets were arrested. Textile strikers in Anderson, South Carolina, in 1934 faced a combination of state patrolmen, local police and strikebreakers. In Columbus, Georgia, two textile strikers were killed by police, while at LaGrange state troopers arrested strikers indiscriminately. Alabama coal miners on their way to a picket line in 1935 were fired upon from a hillside; six were wounded and one killed. Kentucky coal regions have been the home of terror and bloodshed against miners for years. In a 1935 strike a picket line was attacked by company guards armed with pistols, sub-machine guns and gas. A dozen miners were wounded, two requiring hospital treatment, and several were burned by gas. Meanwhile at nearby Pineville two striking miners were killed by deputies. At Pelzer, South Carolina, textile pickets were fired upon, apparently by armed guards from inside the mill; a woman striker was killed and 17 men wounded. It was strikers, however, who were indicted for "rioting" and "violence." Many union men were arrested.³³

Maritime workers, out on strike in the Gulf ports in 1935 and again in 1936-37, met with fearful attacks. From New Orleans came reports of firing on pickets; from Gulfport, that armed guards attacked picket lines and arrested many strikers; according to press accounts, 14 dockworkers were killed during 1935. We are told that "several deaths have resulted from clashes of strikers and guards and strikebreakers;" and from Lake Charles we learn, "the port . . . was open under the protection of the United States government today." Christmas Eve, 1936, in Houston was made a nightmare for striking long-shoremen.³⁴

When 450 cannery workers, most of them girls, went out on spontaneous strike in Tampa, Florida, in November, 1936, arrests and prevention of picketing were reported. In Spartanburg, South Carolina, special deputies were sworn in against striking textile workers, and 80 or more strikers were reported arrested and jailed. A colonel of Georgia militia, if the press correctly reports him, gave in a word the rôle troops customarily play in strikes. He said of a textile conflict: "With the arrest of these 25 strikers we believe that the backbone of the strike is broken."³⁵

More studied than wholesale attacks on picket lines, has been the oft repeated strategy of trying to behead a strike. Strike leaders, by whatever means could be devised, have if possible been gotten out of the way. Vigilante mobs are a highly favoured vehicle. They kidnap and beat up leaders and run them out of town, and the police can piously deny all responsibility.

Such was the procedure in the famous Elizabethton, Tennessee, strike of rayon workers in 1929. Edward F. McGrady and another AFL organiser were kidnapped by vigilantes and escorted out of town. Similarly in the Birmingham area in 1934, a textile organiser, John Dean, was kidnapped by four men and run out of the county. Though he later returned and the identity of one of the kidnappers was known, no action was taken by the authorities against this outrage. Vigilante action against

strike leaders has been a usual occurrence in sharecropper strikes. Sometimes not vigilante bands but "responsible" authorities take on the task of beheading the strike.³⁶

A vagrancy charge may be placed against strike leaders who come from out of town. C. P. Chase, vice-president of the Maritime Federation of the Gulf, was arrested in Mobile as a "vagrant" and kept in jail for a long period in the midst of a strike. When finally the case was brought into court, "vagrant" Chase showed up the spurious nature of the charge by presenting his cancelled salary checks as a union official.³⁷

One of the most cruel forms of pressure brought to break strikes is that directed against workers' families. Wholesale evictions are not uncommon. They are possible, it must be remembered, only because the law co-operates with the employers to put the strikers, their wives, children and few possessions, on the streets. The obvious intent of such an act is to undermine strike morale.

Henderson, North Carolina, saw many evictions in the hosiery strike of 1927. In Gastonia in 1929 a tent colony had to be set up to furnish refuge for the evicted men, women and children. Evictions occurred in the Danville cotton mill strike in Virginia in 1930, in the Marion strike in 1929, in numerous coal miners' struggles, among the sharecroppers. Evictions are especially common where, as in the South, there are many company towns. Textile workers and coal miners frequently live in company houses. If local government is company controlled, then evictions are easy. Often the corporations own the stores and utilities as well as the houses, and can shut off credit for food as well as light and gas.³⁸

The Rôle of Fascist-Like Groups

Civil liberty in the South has many times been outraged by organised vigilante action. Labour has been a chief sufferer. Times without number the Ku Klux Klan and secret bodies like

it have taken a turn at breaking up unions.³⁹ "Klan expected to have part in labour struggle of the South," is one recent headline. "Klan wars on CIO in Georgia areas,"⁴⁰ is another. "The Ku Klux Klan takes a hand in the fight to organise the mill workers of the South," says a caption in *Collier's Weekly*, Nov. 13, 1937, showing a poster found widely distributed throughout the important Greenville-Spartanburg textile area. The poster reads: "*CIO is Communistic. Communism Will Not Be Tolerated. Ku Klux Klan Rides Again.*"

The Klansmen do not stop at posters tacked on trees, or fiery crosses burned on hills. They put warning notices on the doors of local men known to be active unionists. They have threatened and committed violence time and again. Open attacks on the CIO have gone on in many places. AFL trade unionists have been similarly interfered with. The most virulent outbursts come when attempts are made to foster united trade unions of coloured and white.⁴¹

Is such anti-union activity always merely a coincidence so far as employers are concerned? A recent writer for the *Daily News Record* reported the Klan activity in the South as follows: "One can hear in a day's conversation a dozen business leaders state without any reservations of any kind: 'If the Klan wants to run the CIO out of the South, then I am for the Klan, and I know plenty of other good men who are for the Klan, too.'"⁴²

To be "for the Klan," however, means approving more than its anti-labour rôle. Organisations like the Klan, the League for Liberation (William Dudley Pelley's "Silver Shirts"), and the "Crusader White Shirts," organisations with which the South is tragically burdened, are even better known for their racial doctrines. Said a Klan spokesman some years ago:

We exclude Jews because they do not believe in the Christian religion. We exclude Catholics because they owe allegiance to an institution that is foreign to the Government of the United States. . . . To assure the supremacy of the white race we believe in the exclusion of the yellow race and the disfranchisement of the Negro.

It was God's act to make the white race superior to all others. By some scheme of providence the Negro was created a serf. . . . The law abiding Negro who knows his place has nothing to fear from us. . . . We do not act until called upon but if needed we have a great invisible and mysterious force that will strike terror into the hearts of lawbreakers.⁴³

Sentiments like these sound exactly like the hideous racism of Nazi Germany.

We should not be candid did we try to cloak the existence of a very dangerous strain in the white South's traditional outlook, more dangerous to-day than ever. For now, fascism, as a system of national rule, has taught the reactionary forces in all countries that racism can be used to maim and destroy human liberties in the twentieth century. Unhappily, the traditional South still harbours a brand of racism whose shibboleths—"white supremacy," "menace of black domination," and the like—are sunk deep into the minds and emotions of many white children as they grow up. Unprincipled groups cannot be unaware that in some measure the South may be a fertile ground for their doctrines.

This strain can be so dangerous because it is inextricably tied into the labour question. What is truer of the Negro's position in the South than his extreme economic exploitation? What could make surer his maintenance in that subordinate position than his being prevented, by sentiment of prejudice or anything else, from being united with white workers to defend their common economic interests through labour unions? And what can weaken the white unions more than divisions between black and white, which enable each group to be played off against the other? It is entirely in the interest of those who wish to keep labour cheap and helpless, to welcome the activities of fascist-like organisations whose stock-in-trade is anti-Semitic, anti-Negro, anti-labour preaching and practice. Such is the outcome of the view of those who say, "If the Klan is against the CIO, I am for the Klan."

Nor does that entirely round out the pattern employed by these groups. They finish it off by their indiscriminate and unreasoning use of the term "communistic." "Judaism and Communism are synonymous," we read; "the CIO is Communist." Indeed labour organisers, be they AFL (if militant) or CIO, are at once called "Communist agitators." We have already seen how spies have been hired to spread "red scares" to break up unions. These vigilante organisations do it more thoroughly, not to say at less expense. The technique they use is an old one, employed against labour North and South years ago. The only difference lies in the terminology, the terms "socialist" or "anarchist" having been the fashionable epithets of our fathers' day. The same technique precisely was used by Mussolini and was perfected in Hitler Germany. To-day it is being tested out again and adapted here on a formidable scale. The South has already had more than its share of its use. I fear we must expect its spread in the period ahead.

If, as I believe, we are witnessing a tremendous recrudescence and consolidation of reactionary forces in the nation, then we must expect these fascist-minded organisations to share in the spoils. With every attack that big business groups level at liberal labour legislation or the wage-earners' standard of living, these organisations leap into the fray, take on new strength and boldness, and reap a sorry harvest of tragically misled people. The main anti-democratic current, to be sure, does not flow from them: it rises from springs far higher up than these. But they feed it; and in the end they may do much to feed it with a mass following, unless the labour and middle class groups who oppose this kind of thing make greater haste to form a common movement strong enough to stop the rising reactionary attacks.

CHAPTER VI. LABOUR

We cannot expect a profit economy to raise living standards and extend democratic rights without the strongest kind of pressure from the people themselves. In recent times the main stream of this pressure has of course flowed from organised labour. When we turn to the question of what is being done to improve social conditions in the South, the labour movement becomes the focal point of interest.

The record is confused by the wide currency given the view of business-minded Southerners, that the "lower classes" down South are "docile" and "contented," with next to no interest in trade unions. This is of course pure hearsay. A reliable view must be derived from facts.

Southern workers began to organise as soon as industrialisation of the region was well under way. Of course that was very late in the day compared with labour organisation in the industrial Northeast. It could hardly have come sooner, given our retarded development. Industrially speaking, the Northeast had better than a 50 years' start on the South. It took a civil war to open up the southern states to modern industrialism.

The first mill workers' unions were formed in the eighties when the southern textile industry was just beginning to expand. The Knights of Labor organisation was the medium, though being an all-inclusive organisation, welcoming into its local "assemblies" every one, from farmer to craftsman, the textile membership did not particularly stand out. In a few places we hear of textile struggles under the Knights. Such was the strike in the mill villages of Augusta, Georgia, in 1888 when 4,000

workers left their machines, were locked out by irate manufacturers, yet went on to wage a long struggle and win a partial victory.¹

In other fields major conflicts were carried on. Coal miners, transportation workers, workers in lumber camps and tobacco factories, were especially active in the decades before the turn of the century. In the 25 years from 1880 to 1905 (we begin to have government statistics at this time, though they are very incomplete), more than 150,000 coal miners struck in southern coal fields. The great Kentucky field alone saw a total of 40,000 miners out in the course of several important strikes. Transportation strikers totalled at least 70,000 in this period. There were strikes in lumber camps, chiefly in Florida and Louisiana.

Among the most militant workers were those in tobacco factories. In the 20 years before 1900, Florida tobacco workers alone struck no less than 160 times, totalling 40,000 strikers. In Kentucky and Virginia 213 tobacco strikes were called involving around 46,000. In Florida in 1901 there was a notable strike affecting 62 plants with more than 16,000 workers, 2,000 of them women. In over half of the plants the strikes were successful. In the five years after 1900, more than 28,000 tobacco workers went on strike, all but a few thousand of them in Florida.²

Textile workers, we saw, shared in this early movement. The first major attempt to organise them came around 1900 when a drive was launched by the AFL textile union. For two or three years activity continued, with many locals formed in southern villages.³

Altogether, including walk-outs in building trades, at least half a million southern workers went out on strike during the quarter-century ending in 1905. This estimate is based on government reports, admittedly very incomplete. For a region still backward industrially, the total is impressive. Two-thirds of the strikers were from factories and mines. Is it not curious, in the

face of a record like this, that the notion of "docile southern labour" could have gained any standing?

After the feverish activity at the turn of the century there was a lull in textile struggles.* Then in 1913 textile strikes began again, continuing throughout the period of the World War right up to the economic crisis of 1921. In Greenville and Anderson, South Carolina, in Columbus, Macon and Griffin, Georgia, in Charlotte and other towns of North Carolina, in Tennessee, in leading textile centres all over the South there were strikes involving from a few hundred to several thousand workers. The United Textile Workers in 1919 claimed a membership in the Carolinas alone of some 45,000.⁴

At the same time in other industries labour was organising and demanding improved conditions. A total of nearly 2,000 strikes were reported between 1916 and 1921 in southern mining, maritime, lumber, textiles and other principal industries.

In the late 1920's began the spontaneous strikes in textiles. Manufacturers cut off from swollen war-time markets were looking about for ways of recouping their profits. They had been turning to "efficiency systems" with the result seen in layoffs for some workers, more and faster machines for those who remained. Waves of protest were set going. The year 1929 saw strikes in Elizabethton, Gastonia, Ware Shoals, Marion, as well as many obscure, unorganised walk-outs in scattered mills.

In late 1929 the great depression began. A succession of strikes in various industries accompanied its advance. Coal mines, maritime trades, furniture and tobacco factories, electrical trades, laundries, lumber camps, foundries, steel mills, aluminum mills, shipyards—all were affected. Not a state but felt some part of its working class involved. Even large sections of the cotton belt suddenly found the long submerged sharecroppers union-

* Unfortunately government figures on strikes after 1905 are not arranged as are the older statistics, so after that date we cannot learn the movement from year to year.

ising, submitting demands to the landlords and going on strike to win some improvement in their conditions.

Labour in the Thirties

The large numbers participating in outstanding struggles of the 1930's belie all suggestion of "docility." In the first strike of Alabama coal miners in 1934, some 11,000 men left the pits; in the second a few months later, 21,000. Nearly 100,000 southern miners joined in the national coal strike of 1935, most of them in Kentucky and Alabama. There were few southern coal miners who did not take part.

Maritime workers, once the movement of the 1930's began, struck repeatedly in large numbers, 2,000, 5,000, 7,000, depending upon the number of ports involved. The 1934 longshoremen's strike in the Gulf ports brought out an estimated 15,000 men.

The sharecroppers present an extraordinary case. New even to the idea of trade unionism, isolated from birth on the plantations, with their entire livelihood completely under the control of the influential landlord, they joined their new unions in numbers running close to 40,000. When strikes on the plantations were called, large numbers, risking everything, refused to chop or pick cotton at the landlords' low price: 3,000 in central Alabama in 1935; 4,500 in Arkansas in 1936; lesser numbers in smaller strikes from time to time.

In the general textile strike of 1934 the numbers responding were phenomenal. On September 1, the strike was called. On September 3, in Alabama 26 mills struck with 12,000 to 14,000 workers out; in Georgia, all Columbus mills were shut; in the Carolinas, 65,000 to 75,000 were on strike. Successful tie-ups were reported in Gaston, Cleveland, Mecklenburg, and Cabarrus counties, North Carolina; in South Carolina mills in Greenville and Lyman struck; in Spartanburg workers in 17 plants went out. On September 4, 125,000 were on strike

in southern mills according to a union estimate. By September 5, the total reached 150,000. When the strike reached its climax at least 175,000 southern workers were taking part.⁵

Counting all industries, in the four crucial years from 1933 to 1936, between 450,000 and 500,000 southern workers went out on strike.⁶

It is especially significant that in several instances these strikes below the Mason and Dixon line were part of broad nationwide movements of workers. Southern textile labour was a mainstay of the general textile strike of 1934. Coal miners not only joined in the national miners' strike of 1935, but stayed out longer in the effort to do away with the differential and win northern miners' conditions. Longshoremen and seamen joined with maritime workers in Atlantic and Pacific ports to demand union conditions and recognition and to clean out their organisations. Southern workers were moving rapidly into the full stream of nationwide labour activity.

Initiative of Southern Labour

Has southern labour shown responsible initiative in these movements, or, as is so often alleged, were unions and strikes and demands in some peculiar way foisted upon the workers from the outside? Textile manufacturers in particular tried to justify their intense opposition to trade unions by saying that their "contented" southern employés were being stirred up by "outside agitators."

If this were so, how account for what happened during the general textile strike of 1934? Were these 175,000 southern workers dragged from "contented," "docile" work at their machines by the coercive influence of northern walking delegates? The record on this point seems very clear.

Some weeks before the general textile strike, Thomas McMahon, president of the United Textile Workers, and Francis Gorman, vice-president, went on a tour to southern textile

centres. Mr. McMahon reported, "A general revolt throughout the entire State (of South Carolina) against the machine overload (stretch-out) . . . is being prevented only by the insistence of the U. T. W. national leaders that the workers must be patient while a more peaceful way out is being sought." And Mr. Gorman was quoted as saying that his "organisation is attempting to restrain an aroused membership in the South until a hearing can be heard on the union charges."⁷

The first stage of the 1934 struggle began in the southern state of Alabama. In July, Alabama textile workers, organised and unorganised, walked out of the mills. All the leading textile towns were affected as 23,000 workers struck 28 concerns.⁸

In mid-August the United Textile Workers held their annual convention in New York. From all accounts, southern delegates were outspokenly for general strike action. The convention decision went that way. It was voted to instruct the union's Executive Council to call a general strike on or about September 1, if their demands were not met.⁹

When the strike call was issued, many telegrams from locals in southern mills pledging complete walk-outs were received by the strike committee in Washington.¹⁰ Southern initiative proved one of the main elements in this epochal strike. The mill people responded in large numbers. Mass picketing was everywhere in evidence, as were the famous "flying squadrons" sent from mill to mill.

It is plain also that the demands of the general textile strike, drawn though they were to fit the whole body of textile labour in the country, were strongly influenced by southern workers.

Speed-up, stretch-out, low wages, long hours, for years had been straining textile labour to the breaking point. With the NRA (1933) had come Section 7(a), presumably guaranteeing to workers the right of collective bargaining. Nowhere had this guarantee been taken more seriously than by labour in southern textile mills. Workers began to join the union in large

numbers. The textile industry, admittedly in a chaotic state, was the first to adopt a code. Though it preserved a differential wage it promised some improvements. Textile workers were widely acquainted with the provisions in the codes. Complaints of code violations grew in volume. The Winant Board (appointed as a board of inquiry by the President) corroborated many of the workers' complaints. The minimum wage had in many instances become the maximum; thousands of the more skilled workers found their wages reduced. Even the minimum was frequently not earned because "in no week has the industry averaged more than 36.5 hours per person," and at 30¢ to 32½¢ an hour, it would take the full 40-hour week to earn the minimum. Thousands of workers were paid below the minimum, under the "exemptions" clause in the code, when, for example, an experienced worker was put down as a "learner." Numerous devices were used for evading the minimum. Furthermore, the purchasing power of the average worker in the South had fallen 25% between August, 1933, and August, 1934. Most important, nothing had been done about speed-up and stretch-out.¹¹

The strike demands sought to rectify the conditions complained of: the 30-hour week, a minimum weekly wage of \$13 for unskilled workers, higher wages for higher skills, regulation of speed-up and stretch-out, recognition of the United Textile Workers, reinstatement of workers fired for union activity, and the setting up of an arbitration board agreed upon by union and employers, whose decisions would be final.¹² None of these demands but bore directly on southern workers' major grievances.

Coal Miners

Southern coal miners have a long trade union tradition. Progress in unionising the coal fields has been slow and hard largely because the operators have offered effective opposition, but

hardly a mining community is not full of tales of the miners' struggles to have a union.

Attempts to organise in the 1930's came to a head during the NRA. February-March, 1934, saw some 11,000 Alabama miners out on strike. They demanded union recognition, and also an end to the differential wage provided in the then existing NRA code. At the end of three weeks a settlement was effected. The United Mine Workers of America was recognised, union pit committees were agreed upon, and also check-weighmen. Child labour underground was abolished. The employers promised to pay \$4.60 for a seven-hour day as provided in the NRA amended scale.¹⁸

Within a month the operators in the Alabama district shut down the mines and refused to pay the \$4.60 wage. The miners turned the lockout into a strike, demanding equal pay with the North. Practically all the mines in Alabama were involved, including those of the Tennessee Coal, Iron and Railroad Co., subsidiary of U. S. Steel. A total of 21,000 miners struck. The strike lasted a month. Once more an agreement was signed. The miners did not win all they hoped for, because in the meantime General Hugh Johnson, NRA administrator, had met the corporation demand and lowered the code minimum to \$3.80 a day. The union felt obliged to give way.

When the national coal strike of September, 1935, came, southern miners again responded in large numbers. They stayed out after workers in northern fields had returned to the pits. For once more operators insisted upon differential wages, which the miners, again without success, tried to rectify. The 1935 national agreement between the United Mine Workers and the coal operators terminated on March 31, 1937. The new agreement, negotiated and accepted by the operators for the northern fields, was not accepted for the southern. Once again the Alabama miners went out on strike to try to secure from the coal corporations operating in the South conditions like those granted

in northern fields.¹⁴ Meantime the CIO had been formed, adding greatly to the miners' bargaining strength.

The Waterfront

Southern seamen and dockworkers for years were handicapped by labour officials belonging to the school of those who show little concern for rank and file interests. Seamen and longshoremen had to bring about improvements by dint of their own action or do without. Before 1921, longshoremen in the Gulf ports were in most cases organised. As members of the International Longshoremen's Association they had won agreements with most of the shipping companies. But in the early 1920's the union was broken in the ports east of the Mississippi River. Thereafter workers in the union ports of Texas faced the constant threat created by the lower wage rates in nonunion ports.

Conditions in New Orleans were said to be worse than in any other Gulf port.¹⁵ Early in 1931 certain ship lines, members of the New Orleans Steamship Association, reduced longshoremen's wages from 80¢ to 65¢ an hour and refused to deal with the union. Thereupon 2,000 Negro and white longshoremen struck. Their situation must have been desperate. One account says the places of the strikers were filled within 48 hours.¹⁶

Failure of the New Orleans strike was a signal for wage reductions in other ports. Shipping companies in the organised west Gulf ports of Galveston, Houston, Corpus Christi and Texas City announced a reduction of wages, also from 85¢ to 65¢. On October 1, 1931, the 2,500 union longshoremen in those ports struck, and, being better organised, were able to win an agreement providing for 70¢ an hour, \$1.05 for overtime.¹⁷

As the depression advanced, southern dockworkers pushed unionisation. ILA locals in Texas ports doubled their membership. Lake Charles, Louisiana, longshoremen won union recognition, and in the east Gulf ports where no agreements existed,

union membership grew. Again in Texas in 1934 union wage rates were threatened by shippers, on the ground that New Orleans dockworkers were paid less. In May a strike was again called, this time in Texas ports and New Orleans. It was later joined by workers in Mobile, Gulfport and Lake Charles. Altogether, 15,000 longshoremen were reported on strike.¹⁸ There was no clear-cut outcome to this conflict. Dockworkers in the west Gulf ports retained union recognition, but those of the east made little headway.

Throughout 1935 the situation in the eastern ports became worse. Finally the ILA locals once more threatened a strike if union recognition was not granted. Twenty-three of the largest shippers refused, and the new strike began.

This bitter struggle marked a new phase in organisation. Meantime maritime workers on the West Coast had made union history with the waging of their successful strike of 1934. Establishment of the Maritime Federation of the Pacific had furnished an object lesson that workers in eastern ports were not slow to grasp. In January, 1936, delegates gathered at Houston, Texas, representing 10,000 maritime workers from locals of all the principal maritime unions, to form a Maritime Federation of the Gulf. The men responded with enthusiasm. Not so the international union officials. The press said Joseph P. Ryan, head of the longshoremen, threatened to withdraw the charters of ILA locals which participated. International Seamen's Union officials denied that their organisation had taken part, although many seamen's locals were reported represented.¹⁹

The Maritime Federation of the Gulf stood the workers in good stead when in late 1936 they, together with seamen in the Eastern ports, went out on strike at the same time as the 40,000 West Coast maritime workers. Again it was a movement independent of official sanction by international officers, although it was widely supported not only by maritime workers themselves but by labour generally in the ports. By early November several thousand Gulf port workers, both longshoremen and seamen,

had struck. Central Labor bodies in New Orleans and Port Arthur gave vigorous aid.²⁰

Because the international union officials opposed the strikes, the workers had to form their own strike committees and act for themselves. In the Atlantic ports Joseph Curran, now president of the National Maritime Union (CIO), was the strike leader. The Gulf ports had a co-operating strike committee. Throughout the strike, ended by vote of the maritime workers in Gulf and Atlantic ports on January 25, 1937, there was close collaboration between East, West and Gulf such as had not been known before. Perhaps the chief gains in the eyes of Atlantic and Gulf port workers were the strides they felt they had made toward winning in their unions some measure of democratic control.²¹

Organisation of Sharecroppers

In 1931 the Sharecroppers' Union was formed in Alabama. It began in counties where all but a few of the farmers are tenants, and most of the tenants are Negroes. It began in a region of large plantations and once fruitful soil where cotton is the great cash crop. The union started at a time when conditions of destitution among the croppers were extreme. Moreover they were growing worse because cotton was not bringing a good price and the planters too felt the pressure of hard times.

The tenants declared that they were allowed a smaller share of the cotton, their food "furnishings" were cut off sooner, while prices were raised still higher at the plantation store. Such conditions as these were the principal grievances of the croppers when they formed their union.²²

Sharecroppers in Tallapoosa County, Alabama, were the first to organise. The first organisers were Negro industrial workers, among them Communists. Coloured croppers began to join the union in large numbers. White croppers were invited to join, but at first all but a few held back. In Arkansas and Oklahoma

when the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union was formed on the initiative of militant Socialists in those states, the union membership included large numbers of whites as well as Negroes, also a small number of Indians and Mexicans. Later more white sharecroppers joined the union in the lower South.

There were those among planters and local authorities who said that the union was being forced down the unwilling throats of those who joined. That is a familiar argument. The union would hardly have grown so rapidly if the farming people did not themselves desire it. They knew it meant personal danger to attempt an organisation. Yet in a few years in the lower South and the Southwest the two sharecropper unions together had some forty-odd thousand members under a native southern leadership, Negro and white.

There can be no question that the croppers and farm labourers themselves wanted a union, and could provide competent local leadership once their organisation was under way. The land-owners of course did not want it, as the means they took to put an end to its existence showed.

The first attack on sharecroppers came in Tallapoosa County, Alabama, on the night of July 16, 1931. The sharecroppers and farm labourers who had established a union a few months before were holding a meeting in a little Negro church at Camp Hill. The sheriff and his deputies rode out to the church to break up the meeting. What were the charges? There were none of course, unless the forces of "law and order" chose to call the meeting a disturbance of the peace. From a writer who has seen it we get a picture of this fateful church building toward which the sheriff's posse headed on that tragic night. "The pitiful little hovel which served as the church. . . . What Southerner has not seen many such gaunt and ruinous meeting houses set in a clearing of dead cornstalks and red gullies back in the lonesome piney woods?"²⁸

The meeting broken up, Ralph Gray, a Negro officer of the union, was on his way home with friends when he was met by

the sheriff and his men. Ralph Gray was shot and badly wounded. In the melee that followed, the sheriff and a deputy were also wounded.

Then comes one of the most ironically tragic episodes in the whole story. The place to which the deputies rushed to recruit a mob was a Methodist revival meeting in a white church nearby. "Niggers had shot the Sheriff all to pieces!" From then on the countryside was scoured by a mob of several hundred armed men terrorising the coloured population. Newspapers screamed scare headlines. Even in the cities this was so. Wild tales were bandied about of "red violence" and Negro "uprisings," always a sure incitement to white violence in the South.²⁴

Gray, in a seriously wounded condition, was taken to his cabin by friends. There the mob descended upon him. Gray and other coloured croppers who sought to defend him were shot or captured and jailed. It was admitted when these terrible days were ended that one Negro (Gray) was killed and five wounded. Reports had it that several others, "were sent out to chop wood," a task from which they never returned." "The whites escaped unscathed."²⁵

The second year of the Sharecroppers' Union saw another terrible attack. At Reeltown, Ala., lived Cliff James, one of the new leaders who had come forward during the union's rapid growth. James was a Negro farmer. Upon becoming an officer of the union he also became the focus of attack. One day the sheriff and his deputies went to James' house with an order to attach his livestock. To take his livestock away would leave him unable to farm. Hearing of the threat, union members had gathered at James' place to stand by him.

The story goes that the Sheriff called James out to speak to him. There was an altercation and shooting began. James was shot in the back. A friend standing by James, the croppers say, was shot in the hip by a deputy. He turned and ran toward his house to seek shelter when two bullets of law and order struck him. We hear that two officers were wounded. A cropper,

John McMullen, who lived next door to James, was shot dead as he attempted to escape from his house, and a little son of McMullen was shot as he was playing in the yard. An unknown number of Negro croppers were wounded.²⁶

There followed once more the white mob and its unspeakable terror. James' wife was beaten and shot. "Posses" of hundreds of men, headed by the sheriffs of the counties of Tallapoosa, Elmira, Macon and Montgomery, hunted down union members and their families. "Negro women and children scattered in every direction and men took to the woods. Every Negro cabin near a passable road was deserted and officers said the inhabitants were quartered in backwoods houses or sleeping in the open."²⁷ Cliff James, hunted and badly wounded, found his way to Tuskegee Institute Hospital, many miles distant, where they tended his wounds. There the authorities found him and took him away in his seriously wounded condition, lodged him in a nearby jail, then moved him to the Montgomery jail, where he died of his wounds in a cell.

In spite of these terrifying experiences the union grew in numbers. It even launched several strikes and won a part of the croppers' demands. Of course the strikes were a signal for renewed violence against them. In the Lowndes County strike of 1935, six Negro strikers were killed.²⁸

Three years after the Sharecroppers' Union was begun in Alabama, another union of tenant farmers, the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union, was set going in Arkansas. The experience of the Alabama sharecroppers was repeated. The STFU was incorporated under the laws of Arkansas. It tried to organise and operate openly as American citizens presumably should be able to do. It soon faced a reign of almost incredible terror. All this is told in Howard Kester's book, *Revolt Among the Sharecroppers*.²⁹

As the STFU grew it received wide outside support. Thereby it became a significant instrument for bringing sharecropper problems before the nation. In its early years it was endorsed by

two American Federation of Labor conventions. The Arkansas State Federation of Labor rendered support, as did other organisations.⁸⁰

This support in no wise made its path smooth. When the union called a cotton choppers' strike in 1936, the violent attacks from landlords and forces of "law and order" that had welcomed it into the world, were renewed. There was even a miniature concentration camp, if it might be termed that. It was discovered on the Peacher plantation where strikers were illegally held and forced to work. This was the same Sheriff Peacher who was later indicted and convicted of peonage. Striking union men and their families were driven from Arkansas. David Benson, state organiser of the Workers Alliance, was lifted out of a picket line, arrested, and brought before the court. Clay East, a union organiser, was picked up at the trial, beaten by a mob and thrown into jail. The union said that men were forced into the fields to work at the point of a gun. Picket lines were attacked by planters, and pickets, women as well as men, clubbed and beaten. Reverend Claude Williams and Willie Sue Blagden, two white Southerners who went into Arkansas to investigate the disappearance of Frank Weems, a Negro union organiser, in 1936, were way-laid by a planter mob, taken to the woods and flogged.⁸¹

What are we to think of the unprovoked, brutal attacks launched against the sharecroppers' unions? Certainly these men and women had every right to organise. Indeed organisation was demanded by the serious plight in which they found themselves. Where lies the responsibility for the attacks? There are those who would say that many white men, by no means economically well-placed, took part in the mobs that from 1931 on tried to terrorise the croppers and farm labourers out of their attempt to organise. Undoubtedly that is so. It is a tragic pity that such men could be inflamed to act against their own best interests and those of their fellow farmers. On the other hand I have heard tales of white farmers, poor men themselves,

who helped hide coloured farmers in those terrible days when white mobs were on the loose. In any case it does not shift the blame from the shoulders where it belongs to say some of the poorer farmers were misled into joining the mobs. The landlords and the county authorities, leaders in the communities, could have stopped the outrages at an hour's notice if they had so wished.

The unions of farming people have continued to make progress. The new United Cannery, Agricultural, Packing and Allied Workers of America (CIO) was formed in 1937, and most of the organised sharecroppers entered its ranks.

The Farmers Educational and Coöperative Union of America conducted an active campaign among small farm owners—those on family-sized farms. It reached a total of more than 100,000 members in 1938. Mainly its strength lay in middle western states, but Alabama, Louisiana and Mississippi had numerous locals among both coloured and white farmers. What especially distinguished this Farmers Union among farm-owner organisations was its close fraternal relations with organised labour. Its national convention endorsed the industrial union drive. So did some of its state organisations, including those in the South. As a movement it has seen the broad community of interest, economic and political, between wage-earners and farmers. In Louisiana a "union label" for Farmers Union products was adopted a few years ago. In placing it before the public the farmers had the co-operation of industrial workers.

The Organised Unemployed

Southern unemployed workers took their first steps toward organisation in the early years of the depression of 1929. They were spurred to it by a sense of extreme helplessness in the face of rapidly spreading destitution—a destitution left so largely unrelieved under the old leave-it-to-localities relief policy.

The first attempts at unemployed organisation were sporadic

of course. Some groups were drawn together to deal with sudden local relief crises, and then dispersed again soon after the difficulty had passed. A number of communities, however, had well-organised activity, lasting over a period of time. The most characteristic activity of local groups was to appear before official government relief bodies in their communities to urge attention to the needs of the destitute. Some southern unemployed workers joined in the famous "hunger marches" to Washington of 1931 and 1932.

As the New Deal works program emerged and matured, organisations of the unemployed throughout the country established themselves along trade union lines. The several national bodies—Workers Alliance, National Unemployment Councils, and others, already had locals in the South, when in 1936 the different national groups merged into a single organisation, the Workers Alliance of America. A period of consolidation and steady growth then ensued. The labour movement, both AFL and CIO, gave official support to the Workers Alliance, and the Works Progress Administration recognised it as a bona fide union of the unemployed.

To-day the Workers Alliance is functioning in all 13 southern states. During the year preceding its 1938 convention its southern locals increased from 44 to 132. This growth is perhaps not surprising in view of the stress the Alliance has placed on fighting the battle for more equitable treatment of southern WPA workers. The Alliance did much to keep before the Works Progress Administration and the public the fact that southern workers' wages under the old scale for WPA projects were too low. In June, 1938, just a few days prior to the government announcement of the rise in wages for 500,000 southern WPA workers, the Alliance had called for a nationwide campaign to push this wage rise. Its national policies have been admirably mindful of the special needs of workers in the South.

Locally southern Alliance branches have played an active community rôle. The 1938 reports showed Greensboro, North

Carolina, holding a conference to promote slum clearance and low-cost housing, to which came representatives of trade unions and other community groups. In a Kentucky town, Ashland, the Alliance local organised an effective protest when an increase in hours was threatened because of the increase in wages. For months the Claremont, Okla., branch reported it had been denied permission to hold an open air meeting; so it went about increasing its membership and influence, and finally won the permit. During the exciting Kentucky election campaign of 1938, the Louisville Alliance held a political rally in the County Court House, which they said was filled to the doors. Joint action by the Tampa, Fla., Cigar Makers Union and Workers Alliance secured cigar projects under the WPA. In April, 1939, the Alliance of Tampa announced a plan to build a Labour Temple for the county for the use of all trade union groups. WPA lay-offs were threatened in San Antonio, Texas, at a time when great hardship would have been the result; the Pecan Workers Union, the Chamber of Mexican Workers and the Workers Alliance formed a joint committee to deal with the crisis. When great dissatisfaction existed among Birmingham WPA workers, because, they reported, they were unnecessarily assigned to projects at long distances from their homes, the Alliance local took up the grievance with the WPA authorities and won an adjustment. Free lunches for destitute children were reinstated in the general relief program of Oklahoma City upon a move initiated by the small but live Alliance local. When in Grundy County, Tennessee, WPA projects were shut down, the Workers Alliance and the Hod Carriers Union jointly called a conference of representative citizens to discuss the problem and see what could be done.

Branches formed since early 1938 are widely scattered over the South. Jacksonville, Florida, reported enough locals formed to set up a county organisation. Atlanta said its branch grew from a handful to more than four thousand in eight months. Augusta and Columbus, Georgia, added new locals. In Virginia in one

week four locals were chartered in as many centres. Oklahoma had its first state-wide Alliance conference in November, 1938, with ten locals represented. Smaller communities, too numerous to name, in all of the southern states, were reported asking for organisations, and charters had been issued to many when last reports were made. When the national organisation set January 28, 1939, as "National Day for Jobs and Recovery," many southern locals in both large cities and small, celebrated the day with parades and mass meetings.

On March 20, 1939, the Workers Alliance held a conference in Washington of southern locals, attended by some 100 delegates. They came there to lay before Congress, especially their southern Congressmen, the need, as southern workers saw it, for the government works program in the South.³²

The Status of Organisation

The influence of southern trade unions extends far beyond their numbers, but even in size they have greatly expanded in recent years, especially in industries and trades that formerly were unorganised. The latter came with the rise of the CIO, to be treated in the next chapter.

Dr. Frank de Vyver of Duke University gathered estimates of union membership in the South as of October, 1938.³³ They are necessarily incomplete figures. Some unions feel that they cannot give out information of this kind, and in most cases where numbers are given they are approximations. Yet the unions for which membership data could be secured listed nearly 400,000 members. Among the unions listed, but for which there were no membership figures, were the United Garment Workers with 10 union label shops, International Moulders Union having 36 southern locals, the Printing Pressmen of America with numerous locals in all southern states. Unions not listed by Dr. de Vyver, yet having substantial southern membership are the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters; United Cannery, Agricul-

tural, Packing and Allied Workers; International Longshoremen's Association; not to mention numerous federal and industrial local unions not attached to any national body, but chartered directly by the AFL or CIO. The Workers Alliance was also not included.

Unions with the largest membership were the United Mine Workers and the Textile Workers Organising Committee—now the Textile Workers Union of America (CIO)—each having around 100,000. The building trades unions together had over 40,000 members, the transportation and communication workers nearly 90,000. The Steel Workers Organising Committee in *Steel Labour* for April, 1939, reported a total of 27,000 members in its southern lodges. With industries like these well organised southern trade unions came to rest on firm ground.

CHAPTER VII. PROBLEMS OF TRADE UNIONISM

It is a truism that labour's power to change its conditions for the better depends primarily upon its unity. The more exposed workers are to low wages and insecurity, and the more economic and social circumstances tend to breed divisions among them, the weaker they are to help themselves. It is in such circumstances that the old, old axiom, followed by rulers of all ages, "divide and rule," can be used with greatest effect.

All over America the device of dividing labour has been used. One nationality has been pitted against another, antagonism has been built up between native and foreign-born, coloured and white, Catholic and Protestant. Patently a working force at loggerheads is more manageable, from the anti-union point of view. Yet nowhere I think has this policy met with such success as in the South.

We are told that this antagonism is inevitable, almost "instinctive." To be sure there grew up antagonism between black and white in the ranks of working people, but why, and from whence did it derive? This is another point at which our traditional southern teaching does not conform to reality.

The history of the mutual distrust and antagonism bred in the ranks of southern working people of course dates back to slavery days. White dirt farmers, struggling to eke out a living on their few acres of cotton on the fringes of the rich Black Belt, looked at the thriving plantations manned by black slaves. "If it weren't for the slaves, we'd not be poor," they said. Their antagonism turned, not alone against the planter and the whole

plantation system, but also against the helpless victims of the plantation system, the slaves.

In the years following the Civil War, the working people of the two races were thrown into ruthless competition, as all sought to wring a living from the chaotic economy. As a regular thing the Negro worker was paid less than the white worker. Thereupon his lower wage rate served to keep the white worker's standards down. Each was skilfully played against the other, and then the white worker was told—a favourite oratorical theme of aspirants for political office—that the Negro was the cause of all the white worker's economic woes.

The landless "poor whites," hunting work or a chance to sharecrop, mistakenly said to themselves, "If it weren't for the coloured, maybe we could make a living." The coloured people, only recently freed from slavery, meeting suspicion and discrimination on all sides, built up a distrust for white people generally, regardless of the latter's economic position.

Not that attempts were lacking to combat the growing antagonism.¹ Among Negro and white labour leaders in the post-Civil War years there were those who pointed to the danger of division. In the southern Populist movement of the eighties and nineties, individuals and groups here and there urged and attempted the co-operation of coloured and white farmers and workers to protect their mutual interests. Right down through the years in the movements for social betterment in the South, there have been voices to speak out, though to be sure they did not get much of a hearing, calling upon the labouring people of both races to make common cause if their condition of life was to be improved.

The Open Door

A labour movement grounded upon the principle of the open door to all workers regardless of race, nationality or creed, is possible even in the South. True, there are obstacles, but we

have sound reasons, based on experience, for concluding that these can be overcome.

In a number of unions it has been demonstrated that joint membership of white and coloured, foreign and native born, is a workable arrangement. The United Mine Workers furnish the outstanding example,² with strong locals in Alabama, Kentucky, Virginia, Tennessee and other southern states, having a total membership in 1938 of around 100,000 below the Mason and Dixon line. This union, moreover, has proven the most stable in the South, and the one that up to now has won more gains for its members than any other.

The UMWA has gone further than mere admittance of all coal diggers into the union. It has organised the membership into joint locals. "Jim Crow" locals, as they are called in the union, are frowned upon. White and coloured, they tell us, stand together in union halls and on picket lines, just as they do below ground. There are coloured as well as white officers of the locals. In regions like Birmingham, where two out of three miners are coloured, this policy of the UMWA is unquestionably a main source of union strength.

The attitude of white miners toward coloured is reflected in remarks like these, made to a reporter who questioned them.³

"When the bossman hires on, he don't ask you the colour of your skin. All he cares for is how much coal you dig. With the union it's the same, white or black, you're a coal digger still."

"When you're below ground," said another miner, "you can't tell who's white and who's black. In the pit, with coal dust all over you, every last one's black before we come up."

"I look at it thisaway," an old-timer said. "With three out of four coloured, how's our union gona be worth shucks with the coloured miners left out?"

Many of the white miners paid tribute to the courage and quick wit of the coloured members on picket lines during the strikes the Alabama miners have gone through in recent years.

But this solidarity between white and coloured miners was not

won overnight. It has had both ups and downs. It is true the Alabama miners were early to organise, Negroes among them. In 1902 some 65% of the coal miners were in the union, the majority of them Negroes. In a miners' strike of 1908, when there was much violence, local "citizens" raised the objection that whites and Negroes were organising together—excellent evidence that it worked. Again during organising campaigns in the World War period, press campaigns tried to arouse public opinion against the union on the ground that it fostered "social equality" in admitting coloured workers.⁴

The 1920 strike in Mingo County, West Virginia, saw the Negro miners taking a very active part. Miners of both races were beaten and jailed. In a march of 8,000 striking miners, one-fourth were said to be coloured. In Alabama in the same year, when several thousand miners struck, three-fourths of the strikers were said to be Negroes.⁵

Yet Alabama white miners also recall the time some 20 years ago when the white miners went on strike, and the big coal companies brought in coloured farm labourers to work the mines. The latter knew nothing about mining, and of course they knew nothing about the issues at stake. But that did not prevent race feeling from flaring up among the striking miners. When the strike was lost, some of the bitterness inevitably remained.

The coloured miners stayed in the pits. In time conditions taught them the same lesson it had taught those with longer experience in industry. When the big strikes of the thirties came, coloured miners struck along with the white.

The Birmingham industrial area during the NRA period saw a great influx of Negro workers into the trade unions. Within a short time the number totalled about 30,000, of which some 18,000 were in mixed locals composed of both Negroes and whites.⁶

The experience of southern coal miners has in some localities been repeated by other workers. In southern ports many coloured workers are employed as longshoremen. For a long time

in New Orleans there was a coloured union of dockmen, as well as a union for white members. While black and white unions existed separately, they worked together closely, divided work on an equal basis, and had a uniform wage scale. In the 1880's there was a strike of all dockmen to support the demands of the Negro draymen. About this same time a federation of waterfront trades was formed which made no distinction between white and Negro unionists in membership.⁷ In 1923, in the New Orleans longshoremen's strike, 4,400 of the strikers were coloured workers, 1,400 were white.⁸ In 1931 in the Hampton Roads area of Virginia, there were nine locals of longshoremen. They did not have mixed locals, but of the nine, seven were coloured; these seven coloured locals had 21 out of the 27 members on the local longshoremen's District Council. This united Council, chiefly made up of Negro unionists, was able to win material gains. Also in 1931 when Negro shrimp dock workers struck at Galveston, Texas, because their wages were 50% below those on other docks, they were supported by over 1,500 white and coloured longshoremen.⁹ In the great Gulf port strike of 1935 and the national maritime strike of 1936-37, there was similar co-operation. While in these maritime strikes a small number of white and coloured workers were drawn into company unions to be used as strikebreakers, this anti-union activity was far outweighed by the large numbers of both coloured and white maritime workers who were union members and who supported the strike.

Negro workers on the railroads have had a particularly difficult road to travel in the matter of organisation. Because they were excluded from the white railroad men's unions, they had either to go unorganised, which would have left them in a very helpless condition, or form unions of their own. They did the latter. There have been some tragic cases of the white unions trying to push out coloured workers,¹⁰ even to the point of striking to get rid of them. The railroad corporations have been the beneficiaries of this policy, for it has upon occasion made

possible the lowering of the wages of both coloured and white workers. But this has not been a consistent policy of white unions. A different position was shown as recently as 1936, during the strike of railroad brotherhoods on the Louisiana and Arkansas Railway. The white brotherhoods and the Association of Colored Railway Trainmen and Locomotive Firemen struck at the same time, and four officials of the white unions issued a statement saying: "We believe that their cause (that of the coloured association) is just and reasonable, and have pledged to them our support the same as they have to us."¹¹

The most recent unions to confound the theory that coloured and white cannot organise jointly are the unions of sharecroppers. The Sharecroppers' Union of the lower South, and the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union of the Southwest, had as members many thousands of both races.

The CIO's Steel Workers Organizing Committee has opened its doors to all workers in the industry without discrimination. We might expect that Negro workers, so long cold-shouldered by the official policy of so many of the old internationals, would need to be convinced that they were really welcomed in the union, and hence might be slow to join. Apparently they soon proved as ready to organise as any others, when they saw that the new union was open to them. Among the more than 500,000 members of the steel union throughout the country in 1939 were many thousands of Negro workers.

The Negro as a Union Member

A white southern organiser of the Steel Workers Organising Committee once said of the Negro as unionist, "When a Negro joins a union, he means it...the best unionist I have ever seen is the Negro union man."¹² That is significant testimony, for there is still a good deal of prejudice against organising coloured workers on the score that they do not make good unionists.

As a matter of fact, coloured workers have an excellent record in their favour. If we had nothing more than the 10-year struggle of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, made up as it is entirely of coloured workers, it would be enough. In 1937 this union finally won recognition and improved conditions from the Pullman Co. of America. The porters' struggle is surely one of the most outstanding instances of persistent and consolidated action, in dealing with a powerful corporation, that we have in trade union history.

One reason for the prejudice, of course, is that coloured workers have sometimes been used to break strikes. Strike-breaking is necessarily a very serious matter to union workers.

It is a fact that coloured workers have often been used as strikebreakers, and with telling effect.¹⁸ But so have workers of every kind. So have women workers and foreign born workers. And most emphatically, so have native born American white workers. It is meaningless to try to assign to strike-breaking this kind of characteristic. A certain colour or sex or nativity does not make men and women break strikes. It is something else entirely that determines what groups of workers industry will draw upon for this purpose. They are the most exploited workers, those who make the lowest incomes and are subject to the worst unemployment and insecurity, and especially those who have not had the chance to be unionised. Often in the South they have been brought in from the farms and promised good jobs, unaware that a strike was on, or even what a strike means.

These are conditions for which the workers involved are in no way responsible. The blame for strikebreaking does not lie at their door. If blame must be placed, then the fault lies in part with employers, with the use they make of unorganised workers whose unusually exposed economic position—coupled with their ignorance of unionism—makes possible their victimisation. At the same time the unions have themselves to blame. Up to the recent turning point in the labour movement marked by

the rise of the CIO, little attempt was made by officials dominating trade union policy to organise the unorganised. The mass of American workers were left in ignorance of what trade unionism means, except by several important unions. This more than anything else accounts for frequent strikebreaking. Any one who attempts to make it a special characteristic of coloured workers is entirely off the track.

Exclusion Policies of Some White Craft Unions

Some persons are misled by the small number of Negro union members. In 1930 it was little more than 100,000 in the entire country.¹⁴ There have been increases since, first during the NRA, and recently in the CIO drive. One estimate says a quarter of a million new Negro union members have been enrolled by the CIO. The Negro membership in the AFL has also increased.¹⁵ Only a part of this total is in the South, so the number of organised southern Negroes is still relatively small. That is serious because coloured workers after all constitute almost a third of southern non-agricultural labour, and over two-fifths of labouring people in agriculture.

Here again the explanation does not lie in peculiarities of the coloured worker. Great numbers of coloured people who work in southern agriculture are in such a state of destitution that to organise them would seem the most obvious step. Yet the AFL Executive Council for years failed to provide a nationwide agricultural union, nor did it make any serious effort to organise agricultural labour at all. So far as the skilled trades go, with proportionately few coloured workers allowed to enter them, they could not be expected to have a very large union membership there.

Craft union short-sightedness has gone further than that. Beside the negative policy of neglect, some international unions, both AFL and independent railroad brotherhoods, have excluded the coloured worker from membership on account of

race. Many union constitutions and rituals contain clauses expressly barring coloured persons. Others that do not have constitutional bars discriminate in practice with virtual exclusion of Negroes as a result. Only a few unions have specifically provided that there should be no discrimination or no separate locals for coloured and white members.

According to latest accounts, 22 national labour organisations shut out coloured workers by constitutional provision or clauses in the ritual. A number of these are railroad unions and others not affiliated with the AFL. Ten are AFL craft organisations.¹⁶ Several AFL unions, while not refusing to admit Negroes, have a rule against their promotion in the trade, or bar them from holding office or going to conventions as delegates. A few unions, without having any special rules, discourage coloured membership so effectively that no Negroes join.

Discrimination never has been consistent with declared AFL policy. Conventions for many years have taken a verbal stand against it.¹⁷ Some AFL unions have always admitted coloured workers freely, notably the industrial unions that in 1935 went on to form the CIO.¹⁸ Others still in the AFL, among them the International Longshoremen's Association, the Hod Carriers and the Tunnel Workers, have had mixed as well as separate locals for years. The United Mine Workers (CIO), Amalgamated Clothing Workers (CIO), and International Ladies Garment Workers (independent) are the larger unions that opposed discrimination most consistently.

Unions with this broader outlook more than once tried to get the Federation to make deeds conform to words. One such important attempt was made in 1934-35. On the initiative of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and other progressive unions, the 1934 AFL convention was persuaded to appoint a commission to study the question of Negroes in the trade unions. It was assumed that the commission would be asked to report to the convention of 1935. Not until the last night of the convention did A. Philip Randolph of the Porters' finally secure

the floor to make a plea for action upon the report. Even then nothing came of it. John Brophy of the United Mine Workers resigned as secretary of the commission: the Executive Council, he asserted, wanted the commission "to be merely a face-saving device for the American Federation of Labor, rather than an honest attempt to find a solution of the Negro problem in the American labor movement."¹⁹

On this question of organising Negro workers, as on so many others of concern to a healthy labour movement, the extreme conservatives in AFL official circles seem to have had their way. By their failure to deal with the question they made easy the path of the member-unions which practised discrimination.

Since the CIO unions took the field we have seen a change in dominant trade union policy. The powerful new industrial unions of automobile, steel, maritime, radio, and others are pursuing a policy like that followed for years by the United Mine Workers. None of the CIO international unions permit discrimination. It has been their consistent policy to organise Negro workers. CIO conventions have all gone on record against discrimination.²⁰ Under the pressure of events the AFL convention of 1938 finally took a stand against the discrimination practised by some of its affiliated bodies. A. Philip Randolph introduced a resolution calling upon AFL international unions to study the problem of how to wipe out discriminatory provisions and practices. At a subsequent meeting the AFL Executive Council called this resolution to the attention of its unions. If the principle of no discrimination were consistently practised throughout the labour movement in the South, a main obstacle to strong trade unionism would have been overcome.

Problems of Textile Organisation

Except in the crafts, we have not had a stable union membership in the South, certainly not until recent years. This has been especially the case with textiles, the very industry that

should be strongly organised if the southern labour movement is to be effective. Even the big strikes waged by southern textile workers, in the end have not netted them many permanent, material gains.

This we have seen is not due to any lack of worker morale. Yet however staunch workers may be in time of conflict, that does not suffice under conditions such as labour must face day by day in the South. If it did, then independent strikes like those at Marion and Gastonia should have been won. So should the important UTW strikes at Danville and Elizabethton. Certainly the general textile strike of 1934 should have been an overwhelming success if the mill workers' spirit could have determined the outcome. Even wholehearted backing given them time and again by local and regional labour groups has not been enough to bring success.²¹

Of course the newness of southern workers to mill life and their ignorance of unions would slow up organisation. Not more than a generation or two lies between many of them and the extreme individualism of isolated rural life. They have had to learn from experience the value of acting together in an organised way. Knowing this, employers have used every possible method to keep their employees in ignorance. Union organisers are not permitted in many company towns if their identity is known. When with that goes a campaign on the part of industry and the local press to misrepresent unions, by calling them "communists," "rackets," mere attempts to "fleece" the poor worker of his hard-earned cash; when an occasional company-town minister preaches against unions in the mill village church calling them "atheistic" and sinful, what can we expect? Until organisers can get at these people to tell them about trade unions, some workers are bound to have prejudices. It is surprising there is not more of it. Insofar as some southern workers are "hard to organise," this is one reason. It could be overcome in no time if entrenched methods of intimidation and misrepresentation could finally be brought to an end.

The big problem of textile organisation lies in the tremendous strength and prestige of the mill owners in contrast to the workers' poverty. Employers are likely to know many in the seats of government who look at labour questions as they do. If they ask for deputies or troops, they meet a sympathetic response. Intimidation of union members and violence in time of strikes are made easy. Southern workers are not timid or indifferent, once they learn about unions, as we have seen. Even those new to the village sometimes learn quickly. Many a "mill hand" only recently arrived from isolated farm life where he hardly knew the name of union, has rapidly made over his whole outlook and standards in the light of experience and has withstood attacks with extraordinary stamina. But on southern mill hills the mill owner is outright ruler. In time of conflict he is in the strategic position.

Nothing was easier before the National Labor Relations Act put some restraint upon it, than for the mill owner to discharge and blacklist a worker who tried to organise a union. After the Act it continued to be done to some extent. What does that mean, especially in the South? If discharged, the worker loses his house because the company owns it: his wife and children have no roof over their heads. Suppose he hires a cart, piles his few belongings on it, and treks with his family to the next mill village, five, ten, fifteen miles away. The chances are that his record has gone before him. Few of the other mill owners want a union man. Perhaps he tries going farther away, hoping his record will be lost. If it follows him, again he has no chance at a job. If it does not follow him, let him begin union activity again, and soon he is once more liable to discharge. Unless of course he can find a place where the union is already strong enough to protect its members from persecution; but that does not answer the problem of building up the weak union. Men with families to feed and clothe and shelter are hard put to it to continue union work under conditions like these.

The situation is even worse when a strike is called. Most

mill families exist on credit. It is thus they keep themselves in food from week to week. But what is simpler than for the company to cut off credit in a company town? Kitchen shelves are soon empty. Southern mill workers feel the pinch from the very first day the walkout is called. If the national union cannot or does not provide adequate strike relief, and if there are no local sources of help, sooner or later the men and women can be literally starved back into the mill. But companies do not stop at cutting off credit. If they call out the deputies and militia and sometimes strikebreakers violence is very apt to occur.

Experiences like these have been the part, not of a few southern mill workers, but of many. They have been common among those who have tried to form unions and win their demands by striking. There can be no doubt that the violence and intimidation suffered by labour have been a major factor retarding union growth in the South.

Only one condition could possibly counterbalance the economic power wielded by industry. If the American trade union movement had developed along other lines we might have had a different story to tell. The course of that development we shall not trace here—it has been told many times.²² A movement dominated by narrow craft-mindedness on the part of its national leaders—the industrial unions of the American Federation of Labor had only a small influence in its counsels compared with the crafts—was not the kind to go in for intensive organisation of the poor, semi-skilled textile workers of the South. Periodically the officials were goaded by their southern membership into appropriating money and announcing organising campaigns, but little came of these attempts.

To listen to some of the old timers in the mill villages talk, the AFL could not have picked the organisers it did send with proper care. Of course there were able and devoted men, but there were others whose actions, to say the least, were not such as to inspire confidence. An organiser who is undemocratic, who is not alert to the mill workers' grievances, who in time of strike

concedes with alacrity what the employer wants and sends the workers back to work before they feel that they should go, can leave a village badly disillusioned and discouraged. One gets the impression that not a few mill workers had this kind of union experience in the old days. I cannot believe that the men in the leading circles of the AFL ever had much heart in organising the workers in southern mills. Their interests just did not seem to lie that way.

The United Textile Workers might perhaps have pushed its parent body harder. It never was a strong union however. Being made up of semi-skilled, very poor workers, it was one of those industrial union step-children in which the craft leaders of the AFL for the most part took very little interest. If it had received unstinted support from the powerful, well-established international unions it might have built a strong organisation. Lacking that, the UTW limped along, sometimes making headway, but then again in bad times losing ground. Very likely its tactics in organisational work and in strikes were at fault. I think in particular of the general textile strike of 1934, as well as the methods used in some lesser strikes. Called off as the general strike was without any kind of guarantees against discrimination by employers, the inevitable result was victimisation of many. Thousands of mill workers who had poured into union ranks with great enthusiasm, left again in large numbers after the strike, stung by a sense of disillusionment.

It must be said in extenuation of attempts to organise textiles, that the many different employers to be dealt with in the industry greatly complicate the problem. It was a huge difficulty confronting the general textile strike. The CIO recognised the problem when the TWOC was formed. The textile industry is not like automobiles, steel and rubber, where, by concentrating on a few great corporations, union contracts can be won in a major portion of the industry. Textile manufacturing units are relatively small; it is necessary for the union to make its way, company by company. After it has signed up large numbers of

textile workers, it must then deal with hundreds of employers in order to win union recognition. In certain industries whose units are similarly small, employers have formed associations and dealt as a body with the union. Some parts of the clothing industry and hosiery manufacture have done this. It has not yet happened in textiles.

All the more reason why, to organise textiles, we must have a labour movement possessed of great national strength and prestige which shows it is prepared to throw the whole of its resources behind an organising drive. Anything less than that the management of southern cotton mills will not respect.

When the CIO finally came, it did a piece of intelligent planning for textiles. It set up the Textile Workers' Organizing Committee which launched a campaign of large proportions in the southern textile states. This drive certainly did not work miracles. Even if a business depression had not developed in 1937, a few months after the campaign was begun, progress would have been slow. Nevertheless there was a promising response. Within six months, before the TWOC had to trim its sails to the depression storm, some 125,000 southern workers had joined, 40,000 of whom were under union contracts.²³

In May of 1939 the plan to organise the South was greatly advanced by the establishment of a full fledged CIO textile union, merging the TWOC and the old UTW into the new Textile Workers Union of America. At the organising convention in Philadelphia were 111 delegates from 84 southern locals. The new union voted to push with even greater energy the campaign to unionise the South.²⁴

The Spread of Organisation

Under the impetus of the CIO's general campaign the demand for organisation spread to many southern industries. For praise or blame the CIO's name was everywhere.

The Committee for Industrial Organisation was formed in

late 1935. It was well established in the nation's mass production industries by the spring of 1937. It was in early 1937 that a southern campaign began in earnest. The Textile Workers' Organizing Committee was formed, and organising drives were begun in other industries.

Alabama coal miners were better organised than other industrial workers. But their conditions left much to be desired, and we find them waging repeated struggles in the effort to keep the gains they had won. Matters came to a head for them in the strike of 20,000 miners in April-May, 1937, when operators with holdings in Alabama refused to grant the southern miners contracts similar to the union agreements signed with coal companies of the Appalachian fields. By this time the CIO was a going concern and the Alabama coal miners' strike was on the whole successful. In June, 1937, the UMWA could announce that for the first time in the history of the state's coal industry every mine was operating under a union contract signed with the UMWA.²⁵

Even for Kentucky miners the situation began to change. With the National Labor Relations Act operating, and the CIO established in the nation's largest industries, mine union organisers once more braved Harlan County. In the summer of 1938 the coal operators of Harlan finally agreed to sign a union contract with the UMWA. It did not follow from this that intimidation and attacks against the union ceased. Indeed in 1939 the operators at first refused renewal of the contract. State troops were sent in. In time the companies were persuaded to take a different view and a new contract was agreed upon.

Steel brought the greatest surprise. Southern steel workers had often attempted organisation, but always with little success, until the CIO steel union was formed. The Steel Workers' Organising Committee established lodges in the South as elsewhere. They were formed in the mills of the Tennessee Coal, Iron, and Railroad Co., subsidiary of U. S. Steel Corp. It was at this time that the Committee for Industrial Organisation

successfully negotiated a union agreement with U. S. Steel. In the southern mills as well as in the rest of the country the corporation had suddenly reversed its policy of opposition to unions. Southern workers in the "T. C. I." well organised in the SWOC, were parties to the union contract.

In the petroleum fields (65% of the nation's petroleum is produced in southern states)²⁶ the Petroleum Workers' Organising Committee launched a campaign. Was it coincidence that within a few weeks three big companies, Humble Oil, subsidiary of Standard Oil of New Jersey, the Texas Corporation, and Stanolin in Beaumont, Texas, announced pay rises, and Sun Oil said it had a pay increase in view?²⁷

The new National Maritime Union (CIO) had affiliates in all southern ports. The American Federation of Hosiery Workers began in the early 1930's to organise hosiery workers in the newly established southern mills. Since being in the CIO it has intensified its drive.

The clothing industry is important in only a few southern centres, but the clothing workers' unions of the CIO went into those centres to organise. The Industrial Union of Marine and Shipbuilding Workers (CIO) in early 1937 granted its first southern charter to 500 coloured and white shipyard workers in Mobile. It sent organisers in to work among the 8,000 men employed in the shipyards of New Orleans, Beaumont and Galveston.²⁸ The United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America (CIO) began its campaign by organising utility employees. The State, County and Municipal Workers established branches in several southern centres. Automobile union organisers went into the South. Where the CIO had no national union and workers asked for organisation, local industrial unions were chartered. Southern workers in paper, furniture, and tobacco were organised in this way. In December, 1937, the United Furniture Workers of America with several southern locals, was granted a CIO charter. Agricultural labour was not forgotten. Representatives of some 100,000 cannery and agri-

cultural workers met in Denver in the summer of 1937 to form a national union and affiliate with the CIO. This union came to have many members among sharecroppers and other farm labourers of the South.

CIO in the South

The CIO has opened up promising solutions for the problems of southern union organisation. Southern labour could not become a force so long as labour organisation in the nation at large was held back. With the growth of the CIO a large industrial union movement entered the field. The nature of southern industry precludes success for any but the industrial union form. Most of our workers being in semi-skilled and unskilled occupations, for the most part craft divisions simply do not apply. That is more true of the South than of the rest of the country.

Moreover the dominance of northern giant capital over the whole southern economy makes the success of southern trade union development hinge in a special way upon great nationwide industrial organisation.

It is not simply that our southern economy in a roundabout way is beholden to northern capital. Rather, as we saw earlier, great northern corporations actually own or have a controlling interest in many strategic southern industries. When the labour policies of these corporations are anti-union, as they have characteristically been in the past, what chance is there for their southern employés to make much headway except by joining in a concerted nationwide industrial union drive?

Chemicals, petroleum, coal mining, steel, shipping and communications furnish obvious examples of direct control by northern corporations over southern labour policies. Nor is the textile industry a very different case. We know it has always been extremely dependent upon northern capital. Most of the largest mills in the South are northern owned. More and more of the industry to-day is coming under the direct ownership of large

outside firms. While southern textile manufacturers needed no persuasion to hold out against trade unions, it is a fact that the support they got from their northern colleagues and creditors, plus the adamant stand of northern firms in their midst, has made it incomparably harder for southern textile workers to establish unions.

Large northern corporations in the rubber, automobile and aluminum industries have only scattered plants in the South, yet they too have a strategic influence. Their products may not bulk large in total southern output, but if these concerns, being nationally so important, take a strong stand against unions in their southern plants, they serve to stiffen the backbone of anti-union forces all over the South.

Hence it was that so long as America's financial interests were able to bar unions from their main holdings up North, it was unthinkable that southern workers could make much headway. Then came Section 7(a) of the NIRA, the National Labor Relations Act, and the Committee for Industrial Organization.²⁹

Within an astonishingly short period of time the greatest of the mass production industries in the United States were organised. Eighteen months after the formation of the CIO in 1935, there were powerful unions in rubber, automobiles and steel, all of them holding union contracts with some of the greatest corporations in America. Within two years the CIO had, instead of the nine original international unions affiliated with it, 33 such unions with a combined membership of nearly four million.³⁰

Such a change could not fail to alter completely the outlook for southern labouring people.

The organisation of mass production industries into industrial unions, the emphasis on unionisation of textiles, the opening up of unions to coloured workers—before the CIO we saw these to be necessary conditions of a strong southern labour movement, but not until the 1930's was there any significant attempt to put them into practice.

AFL and CIO

It is almost impossible to talk about the contribution of the CIO without appearing to paint a very negative picture of the AFL. This is so because the industrial union movement had to establish itself against the stiff resistance of an AFL national leadership. But the sins of the Federation-fathers should not, so to speak, be laid at the door of the children. In reality a big gap lies between the sentiments of AFL workers and the policies of the extremely conservative and powerful men who have run national affairs of the Federation for years. Those national policies very nearly brought the American labour movement to disaster. They could hardly have done it if the membership at large had had an effective voice.

For my part I can take a very hopeful view when I look at the AFL membership apart from the men who have dominated the Federation's national affairs. Doubtless the skilled craftsmen among AFL workers tend to be more conservative in general attitude than workers at the lower levels of skill. The very exclusiveness of their organisations, cultivated by their national leaders these many years, would make them think that their security depended in some measure upon perpetuating old hard-and-fast divisions. The narrowing effect of those national union policies do create problems.

But there is an essential soundness and integrity about the trade union outlook of the organised craft worker in America that bodes well for the labour movement in the long run. Above all else he is a loyal labour man. He is firmly convinced that organisation is the only way for workers to protect themselves and win economic security for their families. If asked he may sound sceptical about the possibility of unionising semi-skilled and unskilled workers—he may say it has never been done successfully. This he has heard on all sides for years. Also he has sometimes seen it happen within his own experience, that mill workers set up a union in his town which lasted a year

or two and then faded out. Nevertheless, let those same mill workers try again to organise, or let them come out on spontaneous strike, and craft unionists, nine times out of ten, will go to their own union locals and their central labour body, prepared to render full support to the mill workers. They forget their scepticism in the effort to help other workers organise. They would take support of such effort for granted. In their eyes to do so is the plain duty of good union men.

In general the trade union tends to help even weak men develop into good unionists in the end. All its standards of praise and blame make for this. The man who stands by his fellows, whose behaviour is consistently for the common welfare, is held in high esteem. The man who is a "bootlicker" toward the "boss," who tramples on other men's rights in order to earn more or get ahead, or who "scabs" in time of strike, is scorned. Even bad leaders have to put up some appearance of working for the group. How long they last depends upon how good they are at camouflage, plus of course the effectiveness of their own little machines. With the currents of democracy to-day moving so strongly among the mass of workers, it must have become harder for unworthy men to remain in control.

It is true that even the best union men and women will sometimes engage in jurisdictional disputes. They will fight each other right on their own home ground. When they do it, it is because fear for their security has been aroused. Men who feel that fear will do many things against their own interests. When on the contrary their leaders propose sensible ways to settle internal disputes, none welcome common sense more than they.

Common sense could have prevailed when it came to adapting the American labour movement to industrial unionism. The great majority of craft union members would have gone along. Naturally there are some real grounds for disagreement between craft and industrial unions. There are points at which their jurisdictional claims are not clear. Room exists for honest difference of opinion as to which form is best suited to certain border-

line types of workers. But if the principle of industrial unionism for all mass production workers were once seriously accepted by the craft leaders of the labour movement, and if they were willing to rely upon the democratic method of permitting workers themselves to choose, we should find all these problems ironed out without serious friction. For when honestly confronted with a concrete situation, most rank and file unionists, whether craft or industrial, wholeheartedly support the organisation of the unorganised.

If nothing else had taught us that craft unionists, given the chance, are ready to act in the interests of all workers, the story of labour in the South would have done so. For many years the mainspring of progressive action in the southern states came from AFL and railroad brotherhood men. It was they who led the fight in the legislatures year after year for child labour legislation. They worked diligently for laws protecting women workers and for accident compensation. As we shall see, they have taken the lead in the campaign to abolish voters' poll tax laws. They have put their national leaders to shame in the support they have given textile organisation. Southern men in the printing trades, building trades and other crafts, took the lead in helping unorganised southern workers to form their own unions. In the late 1920's they sensed the fever of unrest among the mill people under speed-up and stretch-out. Following a hosiery mill strike at Henderson, North Carolina, in 1928, state AFL men called a conference to set up a Piedmont Organising Council. Similar organising councils were formed in Virginia and South Carolina. In the same year a meeting to promote unionisation of textiles was held in Chattanooga with representatives attending from six state federations of labour. At the AFL annual convention in New Orleans also in 1928 delegates from the South held a special meeting to promote an organising campaign. When a wave of textile strikes broke out craft union men went personally into the villages to teach inexperienced mill workers how to organise.³¹

Again in the labour struggles of the 1930's southern craft unionists, both officers and rank and file, threw their support behind the mill workers, longshoremen, miners and other strikers. Some of the same men were a main support when the CIO first began to organise the South. They helped in the TWOC drive. Steve Nance of Atlanta, at that time president of the Georgia State Federation of Labor, headed the TWOC campaign in the lower South until his death in 1938. Had men like Nance had their way, the entire resources of the AFL would have been placed behind the industrial union drive in the South.

Of course that did not happen. A good deal of prejudice against the CIO was whipped up in some places among conservative craftsmen. Hard feeling was aroused by jurisdictional disputes. Confusion was created by orders coming down from Washington to isolated bodies. Relations were made worse by the campaign of vilification and old fashioned "red baiting" launched against the CIO by employer interests. No name was too bad to call industrial unions and their organisers. Mistakes made on one side led to mistakes on the other. That is the way with fratricidal warfare.

Even so, there has been more united action than conflict. This is true although separate central bodies came to exist in states and localities. There have been outstanding instances of joint work for the federal wage and hour law, progressive labour laws in the states, candidates for political office, and for organising unorganised workers. Joint actions like these have kept the way open for eventual organisational unity.

The South is the last place where there should be division in labour's ranks. The magnitude of southern problems demands the broadest possible popular attack upon them. Skilled and unskilled workers, manual and professional, Negro and white, conservative, liberal and left-wing, trade unionists of long experience and fresh new recruits—if southern people are to make real progress they cannot afford to have any left out.

CHAPTER VIII. THE NEW DEAL COMES SOUTH

Advancing Economic Crisis

Years before 1929 economic conditions in the South had been heading toward disaster. King Cotton had grown very ill; his chronic disease bred by the plantation system was aggravated by attacks of the boll weevil and the low price of cotton after the World War. During the 1920's the demand for raw cotton and textiles in the world market had sharply declined. When worldwide economic depression began in 1929, the consumption of cotton fell disastrously, and there was an increase in carry-over from 5 million to 13 million bales in the American crop between 1929-30 and 1932-33. In the five-year period after 1928 total farm returns from cotton and cotton-seed fell by 70%, so that where the average gross income of farm families in cotton had been \$735 in 1928, by 1932 it was only \$216. At its low point in the latter year cotton averaged 4.6¢ per pound.¹ The value of all farm products in the southern states dropped well over one-third in the five-year period.

The textile industry in the South as elsewhere was showing signs of hectic attempts to adjust to the coming storm. During the 1920's we saw that speed-up and stretch-out increased at an accelerated rate. Manufacturers were attempting to prune labour costs so that their businesses would pay some profits in the period of frantic competition following the World War. General production figures in the two or three years before the

crash remained at a fairly even level. But the economic crisis brought matters to a head. Between 1929 and 1933 conditions grew steadily worse, with spreading unemployment. In Dixie the number employed in manufactures was 20% less in 1931 than in 1927. Many plants discontinued operations—the number open had fallen by a fifth in 1933; wages were slashed so that the total of wages paid in 1933 was 43% below the total of 1929; the current dollar value of goods produced decreased by 39% in the same period. Gross returns from cotton goods fell by 43%. The South was on the rocks.²

In the cities and on the farms workers' conditions were growing steadily worse. There are no reliable figures on the decline. The federal government, the only agency competent to gather such data, did not do so. Only very incomplete reports were made from states on the increase in the number of persons receiving relief and in the money spent for relief. In two years, from 1929 to 1931, the number of persons in the southern states so destitute as to be given relief increased by over 700%. The increase was nearly three times as great as for the country as a whole. The amount spent on relief was increased, but at a much slower rate. Altogether the rising destitution was truly terrible.³

Little was done about these conditions for several years. State and local governments found neither the interest nor the means. While Herbert Hoover was president, the federal government made little pretence of direct aid to the unemployed; it poured millions into private corporations through the Reconstruction Finance Corporation. "Priming the pump," they called it, but it seemed to be the pouring of money into a bottomless well. Not until just before President Roosevelt took office was a federal relief bill finally passed by Congress. Conditions had become so serious by that time that the amount appropriated hardly touched the surface of the need. Not until the coming of the New Deal was a broader recovery and relief program launched.

The Planter Holds the Reins

The New Deal program of basic importance to the South was that relating to agriculture. What happens to cotton strikes right at the South's economic roots, and the first Agricultural Adjustment Act made specific provision for dealing with the cotton problem.

We saw that the accumulation of a disturbing surplus in cotton, beyond what the market would absorb at a profitable price, had caused cotton prices to drop to dangerously low levels when the 1929 crash came. This put not only the grower in a tight place, but also the grower's creditors. Here we refer not so much to the credit merchants. They and the growers deal usually with country banks. Beyond the country banks are the real creditors, the financiers operating the larger banks. Also many plantations and farms are mortgaged, and banks and insurance companies hold the mortgages.⁴ The federal government was also in this picture. It had come in even before the New Deal, through the Federal Land Banks. These banks before the crisis held about one-fourth of the mortgages. When the crisis set in, conditions in cotton became so serious that the whole credit structure in the South began to rock. Banks failed, planters could not get credit, large banks and insurance companies saw themselves caught holding the bag. It was then that landlords and bankers, the influential men of the region, began to clamour for direct help from the federal government. The cotton section of the AAA was devised as a way out.

In the South the AAA tried to steady the credit structure again. The method used was to cut down on the production of cotton so that prices would rise. By the time the Agricultural Adjustment Act was passed in 1933 the cotton crop was well advanced and promised to be a bumper crop. That was the year of the famous plough-under campaign, with "every third row" to be turned under. Growers were paid to plough under over 10 million acres of cotton. The price rose to 10¢, and the

government, by various devices, virtually pegged it at that point.

The second year, 1934, millions of acres were kept out of production—again by government payments to growers in the form of benefits or rentals, presumably to make up for what they lost on the acres they did not plant. The growers desiring to participate entered into contracts with the Secretary of Agriculture, agreeing to withdraw a certain number of acres from production, and in turn receiving a stipulated cash benefit. The Bankhead Cotton Control Act, of April, 1934, was a further and more drastic measure for keeping down total yield, placing as it did a federal tax on all cotton ginned in excess of allotted quotas.⁵

As a result of these measures cotton began to bring a better price, and the gross farm income from cotton rose in the three years 1933-1935 by some \$276 million. In 1933 from crop receipts and benefit payments the growers received an income more than twice that of 1932. In some cotton counties in the Mississippi Delta where 90% of the farm operators are tenants (most of them Negro tenants), from \$500,000 to \$800,000 was paid out by the federal government under the AAA. This was in 1933. Altogether there was actually expended under the original AAA cotton program, up to the end of 1935, over \$400 million.* Most of this went into benefit and rental payments.⁶

The question here is, who got the money? How much did the sharecroppers and other poor farmers get, and what effect in general did the AAA have upon this great mass of the farming population in the South?⁷ A recent authoritative book from the South does not spare words. (One of the authors, W. W. Alexander, later became Farm Security Administrator in the Department of Agriculture at Washington.) "The government under the AAA has assumed many of the risks of the landowners, and thrown them on the tenant. . . . The tenant's share of rental is pitifully small or nil, and on him is thrown the brunt of reduced

* The AAA was declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court on January 16, 1936.

acreage.... It is but the blunt truth to say that under the present system the landowner is more and more protected from risk by government activity, while the tenant is left open to risks on every side....”⁸

Small farm owners found that the meagre amounts they received were quickly taken up in taxes and other debts. As for tenants, one WPA study reports that of the income from the AAA, “The landlord received an average of \$822 per plantation, compared with \$108 per plantation received by all tenants together.”⁹ We do not know how many thousands of sharecroppers were forced off the land because the acres they had been farming were the acres the landlord chose to withdraw from production. We do know that many became casual labourers, living on the edge of subsistence. Tens of thousands had to be given relief to save them from great suffering.¹⁰

The tenant, in other words, was left to bear the chief brunt of acreage reduction, while the landlord received the chief benefits. Apparently this was so because the AAA down South was administered by planters or by those who looked at the southern agricultural problem from the planter point of view. The authors of the *Collapse of Cotton Tenancy* say flatly that the original AAA program as administered “met the landlords’ approval”; it turned out to be “merely a subsidy to planters.”¹¹ The Brookings Institution in its appraisal takes a cynical view. The AAA had to have the big cotton-producing farms under contract, it declares, and only if the landlords were favoured as against the tenants would a large sign-up be assured.¹²

Be that as it may, the landlords, and the banks and insurance companies which were the landlords’ creditors, were not asleep at the switch. They knew the southern sharecropper system as the government clearly did not. And as the Act worked out we find that the bulk of the benefits flowed their way. Little wonder then, that they rendered enthusiastic support to this program of the New Deal.

I think in particular of Mr. Oscar Johnston. He was once described by the *New York Times* as operator of the largest cotton plantation in the United States, at Scott, Mississippi, and moreover, as "intimately connected with the evolution and conduct of the policies relating to cotton." He served as manager of the Federal Cotton Pool and special assistant to the Secretary of the Treasury of the United States on questions of farm finance. When Mr. Johnston spoke, as he did for example in 1935 at a meeting of several hundred cotton planters in Memphis, it was in praise of the AAA. His hearers, the landlords of the region, agreed with him.¹⁸

The bankers' enthusiasm was said to "surpass that of the farmers." This refers to that group of bankers who are the cotton belt's financiers. "I think the AAA has proved to be the salvation of the cotton farmers. Up in my section the cotton farmers are all for it and I'm for it and if anybody don't think so, wait until we vote again. There isn't any doubt in my mind but the cotton program saved the South." This speaker was Eugene Sykes, president of the First National Bank of Aberdeen, Mississippi. The president of the National Bank of Commerce of Houston, Texas, agreed. The planters, their bankers, the insurance companies who held mortgages, crop financiers, and any and all business men whose interests were tied into cotton production and marketing, were backing the AAA during the first New Deal.

It was much the same among the tobacco planters and their bankers. Millard F. Jones, vice-president of the Planters National Bank of Rocky Mount, North Carolina, was quoted as saying, "Ninety percent of the farmers in my area are for the AAA and I think that fully that many business men think it is a fine thing.... The tobacco farmers in my area are getting out of debt and naturally the banks and business interests are profiting by this." Mr. Jones' home town is located in a section from which comes one-half of the 700 million pounds of flue-

cured tobacco raised in the United States. The big livestock dealers were also all for the AAA. "The mule business was on the rocks," said Clifford N. Ragsdale, head of Atlanta's livestock dealers. "We ascribe our comeback to the advantage derived by the farmers from the administration of Franklin D. Roosevelt."¹⁴

Was discrimination against the sharecroppers the intention of the AAA? I do not for a moment think so. To be sure, the AAA made such an outcome inevitable by allowing the Act to come under the control of the planter bloc. In those early days it knew all too little about the seamy side of the sharecropper system. It may be that the AAA had an naïve faith in the disinterestedness of the planter bloc.

Of one thing I am certain. There came into play that glaring weakness so often shown by liberal administrations, and especially evident during the first New Deal—that in seeking to be all things to all men, they try to placate the conservative opposition by turning over to it important rôles to play. No act, however well drawn, is safe if its administration is not in the people's hands. And of course in the case of the Agricultural Adjustment Act in its cotton section, the planter bloc seems already to have had its finger in the pie while the Act was being drawn. With the planter influence locally strong, the discrimination practised in their own favour was a foregone conclusion.

The New Deal sought to correct some of the worst abuses as soon as these became fully evident. Just before the first Act was abrogated by the Supreme Court, certain amendments had been made in the interest of the sharecroppers. It was planned to increase the proportion of benefits allotted to croppers: the contracts contemplated for 1936 and succeeding years allowed 25% as the sharecroppers' share of the adjustment payments, as compared with about 10% in the 1934-1935 contracts. These did only partial justice to the cropper, since they represented only a portion of the cropper's contribution to the product.¹⁵ Pro-

vision was also made for separate payments to be made direct to tenant and landlord. Here too, however, was a loophole, for it was provided that there could be the waiving of separate payment by joint consent.¹⁶

If when the New Deal began there had been as much public information on the condition of the sharecroppers as came to exist later on, undoubtedly the cotton section of the AAA would have had more provisions safeguarding the welfare of the poorer farming people. At first the sharecroppers lacked organised channels for bringing their grievances before the AAA. Even when cropper delegations did begin to appear in Washington, their insistent appeals were no doubt in some measure offset by the pooh-poohing of the planter group. That the southern tenant farmer problem did at last get the ear of the country is shown by the publication of government studies on the question, by the appointment of a Federal Tenancy Commission, by the hearings conducted by the latter in leading southern centres at which tenant farmers testified, and by the passage of a federal Tenancy Act in 1937. The Tenancy Act, we shall see, is not yet much of a measure, but at least it gives federal recognition to this crying problem of southern farmers.

Meantime the Supreme Court annulled the first AAA. With all the Act's shortcomings, this was decidedly a blow. The poorer class of farmers had received some benefits even if the planters were successful in getting the bulk. Given the rising sentiment in labour and liberal circles calling for more equitable treatment of the sharecropper and for loosening of the landlord stranglehold on the Act, undoubtedly further improvements would have been made. Or better, a substitute act might have been drawn, this time giving real consideration to the masses of farming people. But the Court's decision narrowly circumscribed what the federal government could do to deal with agriculture. When the later New Deal Acts were drawn they were limited by this fact.

Industrial Workers' Gains

When we come to workers in industry, the story takes a more cheerful turn. Once the labour provisions had been put into the National Industrial Recovery Act, large numbers of southern workers began to take them seriously and to act accordingly.

For the first time a bottom was put to their wages, and by action of the federal government. Of course the minimums set were very low, and they maintained the southern differential. There was a tendency for wages that had been higher to be leveled down to the minimum. Yet earnings of southern workers had been so universally low that even the minimum, such as in cotton textiles—\$12 a week—constituted an improvement for many.

Similarly the shortening of the work-week by federal authority marked an important step forward, particularly in Dixie where the usual week had always been very long. What was the result apropos the main objective of these provisions—to spread work and create more jobs—we do not know. But leaving that aside, it was invaluable that workers formerly used to a 50- or 60-hour week had now experienced federally-enforced shorter hours. Since the mills had done it once, why could they not do it again? Once raised, this question would not be downed again easily. By so much the movement for shorter hours was advanced in the South.

The codes also banned child labour under 16 in factories, and it is claimed that many children were taken out of the southern mills. Although only a small part of our southern child labour problem was affected by codes, since most child labour is in occupations left untouched by the NRA, yet this too had a most salutary effect so far as it went. It showed again what the short-lived Acts of 1916 and 1919 had demonstrated, that the way to regulate child labour in America is by federal laws.

Most important of all, Section 7(a) of the NIRA, by recognising the right of workers to collective bargaining, was of

untold significance to labour. True enough, employers' organisations did not take this supposed guarantee seriously. Even before the Act was declared unconstitutional, Section 7(a) had been virtually nullified by the refusal of southern employers to deal with bona fide unions. Even so, the existence of the guarantee had a wholesome effect. The trend toward organisation among southern workers, rising steadily since 1929, in 1933 took a sudden spurt. Section 7(a) opened the way, and workers began to pour into trade unions. Many thousands who never before had known what a union was, now learned. Fortunately this movement was not interrupted by the demise of the NRA, since meantime the National Labor Relations Act had put the right of labour to collective bargaining on a firm legal basis.

In one crucial respect wage-earners suffered a setback, victimised by already existing discriminations. In the codes of fair competition, from first to last, with no industry of moment in Dixie excepted, was incorporated the vicious southern wage differential.

For the most part the differentials were insisted upon by the employers on the ground that living costs are lower in the South. But we saw earlier that living costs are little if any lower when the matter is examined in detail. Moreover the codes were far too inconsistent for us to take seriously this alleged plea for the code differentials. Why should one code provide a 2¢ or 3¢ per hour differential, and another a differential of 15¢ to 27¢ per hour, for industries operating in the same locality? Take the Saddlery and Ice Manufacturing Codes. Both defined the "South" to include exactly the same states. Yet the minimum wage set for North and South in the saddlery industry showed a differential of $2\frac{1}{2}$ ¢ per hour, while that of ice manufacturing was $8\frac{1}{2}$ ¢. In both the Automotive Parts Code and the Cleaning and Dyeing Codes the same geographic area was covered. But in the first named code the differential ranged from 2.8¢ to 3.2¢ per hour, while in the second it ran from 7¢ to 13¢ per hour.

The Lumber and Timber Products Code illustrates another point. In this code portions of a northern state (where labour organisation was weak) were included in the "southern district" for purposes of wage differentials. For the plywood division of the industry, one county of Illinois had the same minimum wage of 23¢ an hour as did the South; for the veneer, fruit and vegetable packing subdivision, nine counties of Illinois were included in the southern district, also with a minimum wage of 23¢ an hour. Workers in Chicago in other subdivisions of the industry, however, had a 50¢-an-hour minimum wage. It was certainly not differences in cost of living that dictated these strange geographic arrangements.

The codes simply perpetuated a state of affairs that already existed. The employers' associations insisted that the southern differential be maintained, and that the differential as between white and Negro workers be maintained, and they were maintained. The trade unions opposing a differential wage were not yet strong enough to prevent it.

Employers were not, however, reconciled to the NRA by this or any of the other victories they had won. They liked the features of the Act that freed them from some of the stringencies of the anti-trust laws. Big business liked to have the trade associations strengthened and their control concentrated. If the NRA had been left entirely to business men to administer in their own way, it is more than likely that business would have clung to the NRA. But it never did want the labour provisions, and it did not get as free a hand as it had hoped to run the code authorities. So soon as business conditions began to improve even slightly, the corporate interests and their associations began to clamour for the end of NRA.

Southern manufacturers were like all the rest in wanting to see the NRA go. So they declared in response to a questionnaire sent to 6,000 of their number by the Southern States Industrial Council. The answers, published in January, 1935, showed more than three-fourths of the employer group anxious to have the

NRA abolished or drastically modified. As we can guess, Section 7(a), the collective bargaining clause, was a principal grievance.¹⁷

Relief to the Unemployed

Relief is usually thought of as a negative measure of purely passing effect. Not so the relief rendered the unemployed in the South during the economic crisis. It not only prevented a great amount of extreme human suffering. Without it the long-time condition of the population would have been much worse, for wages could and would have been driven to new low levels.

Here again, however, the story is not what it might have been. No part of the New Deal met with more bitter hostility, once the severest economic crisis had passed. As each new emergency program was announced we find the South discriminated against in relief with a far lower standard in effect than elsewhere. I do not say this in a dog-in-the-manger attitude, but because it again makes plain what we cannot overlook. Only vigilance and organised effort made certain that the programs of labour and the New Deal were in any measure carried out.

In the South conditions were peculiarly acute because, since it was a low-wage region, few workers had any resources of their own to fall back upon, and because our states are so ill-equipped in public and private relief services. Moreover, matters had been allowed to reach a critical state through three long years of mounting distress.

Fortunately when Roosevelt took office he placed the Federal Emergency Relief Administration under competent direction, not in the hands of incompetent political appointees. This was a boon to the South especially, because whatever relief had been rendered there had been disgracefully inadequate. In July, 1933, the average amount spent on relief in the southern states *per family* ranged from a low of \$3.96 *per month* in Mississippi

and \$5.19 in Alabama, to \$13.89 in Louisiana. Eleven out of the 13 southern states were paying on the average less than \$7 per family per month. This included urban and rural areas. Outside the principal cities the amounts given were even lower.¹⁸

With the advent of the New Deal, southern standards began to rise, not only because now there were federal relief funds, but because the FERA sought to raise standards, and because trade unions and unemployed organisations were active in urging the need. By January, 1934, standards had risen slightly. Five southern states still averaged below \$7 per family per month, but five showed averages between \$7 and \$10, and three ranged from \$10 up to \$18. In the next two years standards were raised still further. One state, Louisiana, now averaged \$26.71 per family per month; families in nine of the states received on an average between \$11 and \$15 a month. In none was the sum as low as \$11.¹⁹

Altogether, standards were greatly improved. However, the relief given southern workers was still far below that given in other sections of the country.

In July, 1933, when the average per family per month in the country as a whole was \$15.07, in the South it was only \$6.71, less than half as much. In Massachusetts relief families were averaging \$32.77 per month, and in New York State \$30.59. In November, 1933, while standards were raised in the South, they were also raised in other sections (as they should have been). The average southern worker's family still got little more than half the amount of relief given his fellow worker in the country at large—\$9.72 as compared with \$18.22. In January, 1935, after two years of "raising standards," the same differential continued; southern workers on relief averaged just half the amount given in the country as a whole—\$15.14 per family per month as compared with \$30.43.

This marked differential cannot be explained on the ground of lower living costs, for not even extremists have suggested

that southern workers' cost of living is only one-half that in the North.

That local customs entered into the administration of federal relief is seen in the lower standard set up for coloured workers. In Mississippi, for example, where more than half the population is coloured (and admittedly there was far greater suffering among Negro industrial and agricultural labourers than among white), the Negro family averaged \$7.09 per month in June, 1935, whereas white families averaged \$11.13.²⁰

When the WPA was instituted, discriminatory rates were continued. The country was arranged according to regions and to population density within regions, and different scales of wages were applied. The net result was for the great majority of southern WPA workers at unskilled work to get the lowest rate to be found in the country. In the smallest towns, from \$19 to \$21 a month was all a man at unskilled work could earn. In the few southern cities of over 100,000 population, he might be paid as much as \$30-\$35 on which to support his family. In Region I (northern states) where the highest rates were paid, the earnings for unskilled work were a third again as high, ranging from \$40 in the smaller communities to \$55 in the cities of over 100,000.²¹ Not until the summer of 1938, when the new lending-spending program was set going, were southern rates of pay on WPA made more equitable.

Why were these differentials maintained, and also, why were communities periodically thrown into relief crises due to cuts in federal funds? Certainly it was not because the Relief Administration in Washington was unacquainted with the need, although some southern administrators may have minimised it. It was not due to callousness. We can only explain it by the persistent campaign against federal relief. Business interests opposed adequate relief, they opposed relief wages if the latter were at all on a par with local wage rates, no matter how low local rates might be, and finally they waged a campaign to bring federal relief altogether to an end.

All over the country we find business organisations, politicians, publicists, indeed all sorts and kinds of well-placed, well-fed people, voicing the business-man slogan of a return to "private local relief." Big business leaders spoke out, the country's powerful business groups—Chambers of Commerce, National Association of Manufacturers, special conferences of business men called to consider public questions—all brought forward "recovery programs" which sooner or later made an attack upon federal relief.*

Southern employers if anything were more bitter than any others, so fearful do they seem to have been that federal relief standards might jack up low southern wages. What better reflection of this than the unforgettable words attributed by the *New York Times* of August 30, 1934, to a leading southern manufacturer, speaking apropos of the "unfortunate official commitment, no one shall go hungry in this country?" "Even God Almighty never promised anybody that he should not suffer from hunger." Nor was this an isolated sentiment. The *Manufacturers Record*, organ of southern business men, declared June, 1936, "Relief has become a monstrosity. 'No one in America shall starve,' When was it decided that that is a business of the Federal Government?"²²

As a matter of fact it was decided by overwhelming vote of

* The National Association of Manufacturers blasted the New Deal from stem to stern when it met in December, 1934, demanding among other things drastic changes in relief policy. (*New York Times*, Dec. 4, 1934.) The Joint Conference for Business Recovery, representing some of the leading business men of the nation, met at White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia, in late December, 1934. Its platform said it "is not properly a function of the Federal Government" to render relief. They demanded it should be left to the family, or private charity, or the local community and states, and this at a time when one-sixth of the population had to be given aid. (*New York Times*, Dec. 20, 1934.) A meeting of the Southern States Industrial Council at Birmingham, in December, 1935, attended by between 300 and 400 men from the southern states, in general voiced its disapproval of the New Deal. (*Birmingham News*, Dec. 18, 1935.) The Chamber of Commerce of the United States issued numerous calls for change.

the American people that this and other welfare measures are the business of the federal government as President Hoover learned to his sorrow in 1932. Mr. Hoover temporised a bit too long over the appropriation of federal funds for the unemployed. It was reiterated in an even more decisive manner when the American voters gave the New Deal a landslide victory over Landon in 1936.

Although this was so, the forces opposed to federal relief and favouring a southern differential continued to clamour for change, and to exert pressure on their local communities. These are the self-same groups that fought the 1938 lending-spending bill and the 1939 WPA appropriation. They were never able to do all the damage their full program envisaged, but following their campaigns good policies were modified and relief was cut.

One reason the business opposition did not work greater havoc was because of the vigilance of trade unions, social workers, and the organisations of the unemployed. Only in the larger cities did these latter groups function, however, and then under the handicap of attempting something new. Later in many southern cities the Workers Alliance became a going concern, well-equipped to bring the problems of its members before local relief administrators. In the first years of federal relief unemployed organisations were divided and in an experimental stage. Even so, there are epic tales of the work these little groups did in bringing the problems of the unemployed before their communities, and in offsetting the pernicious campaign of the groups opposed to federal relief.

The Rôle of the TVA

The establishment of the Tennessee Valley Authority early in the New Deal Administration, located as it chanced to be in the South, made the region the centre of a controversy over the question of public utilities which became an issue to the

entire country. For years, throughout the Coolidge and Hoover regimes, progressive Congressmen led by Senator Norris of Nebraska, had fought to prevent the government from throwing its valuable holdings on the Tennessee River into the lap of private firms. Originally the water power sites had been purchased by the government during the World War for the establishment of nitrate plants for war purposes. Their value as potential war industries may well have been the decisive factor saving them from being swallowed up by private corporations.

When finally the TVA was established, its objects were three-fold. It sought to aid agricultural readjustment by providing cheap fertilisers to farmers. In line with this idea it set up a program of teaching diversification of crops and prevention of land erosion. It also sought to provide cheaper electricity directly, by selling electricity to those counties in the region that built publicly-owned power plants; also indirectly, by selling electricity at a "fair" rate, and thus bringing down the excessive prices charged by private companies. In short, TVA prices for electricity were to serve as a kind of "yardstick" for the rest of the country. Finally, TVA hoped by its dams to foster flood control and navigation on the Tennessee River, and through its power facilities to attract new industries to the region and thereby bring more income to the inhabitants. The program as a whole was thought of by its initiators as a form of regional planning.*

Simply to recite part of what TVA has done is to give a picture of unusual accomplishment. Of the 11 dams projected, all of them to be large dams equipped with large-scale generators, three had been completed and three more were under

* The region covered by TVA touches 123 counties in seven states. Slightly over two and a quarter million people live in these counties, three-fourths of them on farms. It typifies that kind of sub-region in the South lying on the fringes of the cotton belt, where farms are smaller than in the plantation area, where there is more diversification of crops, where only 10% of the population is colored, and where the tenancy rate as compared with the Black Belt is low.

construction at last reports. These have already proved their worth in flood control during high waters in 1936 and 1937. Navigation on the Tennessee River is steadily increasing, due to improvements. Cheap river transportation will be an asset to the entire region.

By the end of 1938 electric power was already being generated at Norris, Wheeler and Wilson dams. Eighteen municipalities in Tennessee, Mississippi and Alabama, and 17 country co-operatives in Tennessee, Mississippi, Georgia and Alabama were by then buying power from TVA. Sixteen other municipalities, including several large centres, among them Memphis, Chattanooga and Knoxville, had contracts with TVA but were prevented from obtaining power by lawsuits brought by private companies.

TVA has lowered the cost of electricity in its area, not only to the municipalities buying direct from TVA, but to other consumers. The private companies have been able to lower their rates and extend their facilities, and, I am given to understand, still show a neat net profit. All this has increased the consumption of electricity in rural areas and extended it to many rural consumers who heretofore were unable to secure it.

Cheap fertilisers are produced by TVA at its Muscle Shoals plant, and these are used to promote a soil conservation program. Ultimately the object is to increase farm income by better utilisation of the land. TVA supplies the fertiliser, and various farm agencies supervise the experiments on selected farms. From 954 demonstration farms in 1935, the number had grown to 22,000 in 1937 with a total acreage of about three million. Here a change in farm methods is taught to prevent soil erosion and introduce some diversification of crops.

Reforestation is also being undertaken and encouraged. By late 1937 TVA had planted approximately 37 million trees, with 18 million more to be set out by the end of 1938.

For its own workers TVA has undertaken a health program, both on the job and by setting up coöperative medical

aid plans. It is joining with local health authorities in a malaria control program.

On TVA's internal policies there are conflicting reports. In 1938 the personnel manager was called upon to testify before a Congressional investigating committee. Reports in the press were not very illuminating. He was asked concerning discrimination against coloured workers by the Authority. He denied that any existed, but admitted that next to no coloured persons held skilled or white collar jobs. Willson Whitman, author of *God's Valley*, sees no discrimination.²⁸ The Authority has an employee relationship policy which recognises the workers' right to join trade unions. Virtually all are said to be members of either the AFL or CIO. Those on the construction work are of course members of the AFL. The office workers' union is a CIO affiliate. Wage rates for skilled labour are similar to those in the surrounding region. For unskilled labour wages tend to be higher than going rates, and hence should be a factor in raising low rates in the countryside. Some say the collective bargaining procedure has grave faults, in that the Authority's decision on wages is final and the grievance machinery is cumbersome and ineffective. Yet TVA's labour policies cannot fail to have a wholesome effect even in sections of the South remote from the area. To have so large a labour force able to belong to unions without interference and to work under excellent conditions, would be a leavening influence throughout the South.

Fine as is the TVA program, I think we should see plainly that it can perform no miracles of social reform. It can raise the living standards of the people in its area of operation. It can lead to the establishment of other TVA's in other regions. It can be a factor in preventing the private utility corporations from taking advantage of the consumer public. But it cannot nor does it pretend to do much more than that.

Nevertheless, the spokesmen of the utility interests, and indeed business organisations in general, have made TVA out to be a terrible threat. So unrestrained and unrelenting has been

their hostility that TVA became a central issue between giant capital on the one side and the great majority of the American people on the other.

The Edison Electric Institute, trade association representing 80% of the electric power interests in the country, lost no time "declaring war" on the TVA. "Using public funds to destroy by competition . . . investments of private capital in public utility enterprises," was the gist of its propaganda. The American Liberty League, coalition of the most arrogantly reactionary groups in America, mustered its forces. The Chamber of Commerce of the United States placed itself in the forefront of the opposition. When the Supreme Court rendered its decision in February, 1936, upholding certain features of the Act, "the chamber reiterated its opposition to government competition in business, and announced its intention to fight all such proposals by every 'legitimate means.'"²⁴ The southern business journal, *Manufacturers Record*, closely seconded the stand of northern interests. Witness its editorial in March, 1936, entitled "Government Competition Must Be Curbed."

The vast utility interests were the spearhead of the fight against the TVA, with the Commonwealth & Southern Corp. most conspicuous among them. Even had this billion-dollar corporation been the only antagonist, the struggle would be spectacular for its historic import. Consider the number and scope of this holding company's subsidiaries, embracing Alabama Power Co., Georgia Power Co., Gulf Power Co., Mississippi Power Co., South Carolina Power Co., Tennessee Electric Power Co., besides others in Ohio, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Indiana and elsewhere. Its operating companies in 1936 served over 3,000 communities with a combined population of about 5,500,000 in eleven states. In addition, lines of its subsidiaries reached rural areas, and communities served at wholesale, having a population of some 4,500,000. Its customers for electricity numbered a million and a quarter, and for gas another quarter million. In a number of southern cities it owned the transporta-

tion systems; in two states it owned coal properties.²⁵ We have already seen it to be closely linked to the House of Morgan. Wendell L. Willkie, president of the Commonwealth & Southern, became perhaps the best known figure in the anti-TVA fight.

We could cite numerous attempts by power companies in the area to thwart TVA. For example, the *Chattanooga (Tennessee) Times* on November 17, 1935, told of the Tennessee Electric Power Co. obtaining an injunction to prevent Lenoir City from borrowing PWA funds. It wished to extend its municipal power system so that TVA electricity might be used. Bedford County, Tennessee, had similar trouble.

Latest move in the attempt to block TVA came in 1937 when 18 utility corporations brought suit against the Authority in Federal Court. In the forefront of this attack were companies of the Commonwealth & Southern. The case was decided in favour of TVA, but it was promptly appealed to the Supreme Court.²⁶ In 1939 the latter rendered a decision upholding TVA.

There was also the case of Mr. Arthur Morgan, former chairman of TVA. Largely in consequence of the tempest in a teapot stirred up around his case, TVA's foes in Congress were able to get a Congressional investigation which was launched in the summer of 1938. When the Committee made its report in April, 1939, it gave TVA a clean bill of health.

Could there be a more formidable array of forces than these that have formed themselves against the mild purposes of the TVA? Certainly it teaches us that no project, however limited in social intent, will escape attack if its program attempts in any measure to curtail corporate power and its domain.

The Second New Deal

Where the first New Deal felt its way haltingly and indecisively, the second New Deal took much bolder steps. None benefitted so much by these steps as did the South.

There was a world of difference between the timidly proposed and equivocally enforced Section 7(a) of the NIRA and the plainspoken provisions and enforcement of the National Labor Relations Act. In the latter case the President appointed men who, by their honest, unbiased administration, have given real content to the fine old concept of "public service." True enough, it will take more than the decisions of a federal board to protect southern workers in their right to organise. The antagonism of some employers to unions is too deep-seated for them meekly to give way at the first drop of a decision from the National Labor Relations Board. Only as organised labour becomes strong in the South will we see much of a change. That is on the assumption that crippling amendments do not vitiate the Act.

A rich contribution of the second New Deal to the South was the work of the President's Committee on Farm Tenancy.²⁷ Its inquiry covered the entire country, but necessarily its major work centred on the South. Hearings were held in the course of its deliberations, not only in Washington, but in local communities also, where representatives of organised small farm owners and sharecroppers could personally appear and testify as to their conditions and needs. On the commission sat a representative of organised sharecroppers, W. L. Blackstone, of the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union. His minority statement appended to the published report was a cogent addition.

Both federal and state measures were suggested in the commission's recommendations for action. The latter dealt with problems of land ownership for tenant farmers, measures to stop the alarming loss of farms through foreclosure on those heavily in debt, and even a program for improving the condition of farm labourers. It called upon the states to take steps for bettering lease contracts and landlord tenant relationships. It approved written contracts between landlord and sharecropper—a practice virtually non-existent to-day. It urged the federal govern-

ment to undertake work with a view to improving tenant contracts. It analysed the problem of taxation of farm lands. It spoke, though all too feebly, of the right of sharecroppers and farm labourers to organise.

The Bankhead-Jones Farm Tenant Act, passed in 1937 to implement the recommendations of the report, fell far short of its goal. The appropriation of \$10 million for the first year, \$25 million for the second, and \$50 million annually in succeeding years, to be used as loans to tenant farmers, croppers and farm labourers for the purchase of farms, is of course deplorably inadequate. Estimates have it that less than 1% of the present total of tenant farmers could receive aid during the first three-year period. The Farm Security Administration reported at the end of its first year that it was possible to make only 1,887 loans for purchase and improving farms. For every loan that could be made, 100 applications were received, and applications were not sought except in selected counties.²⁸

After long effort the Administration secured passage of a federal wage and hour law, the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938. President Roosevelt had been urging the measure since the demise of the NRA. In the end it had to be brought on the floor of the House over the heads of the Rules Committee. Among its most vigorous opponents were a group of southern congressmen.

The struggle which opponents put up accounts largely for the Act's several weak features. The minimum wage was set too low, beginning as it does at 25¢ an hour. The leeway allowed to commissions for the different industries to decide when and where to advance the minimum toward 40¢ is probably the means by which advocates of southern differentials hope to preserve the South's lower wages. Perforce the coverage of the act is limited by Supreme Court decisions to industries whose goods enter interstate commerce. However, it did not preserve the differential wage in so many words. It set up federal regu-

lation of child labour in interstate manufactures and mining, with administration delegated to the federal Children's Bureau. Above all, it was a federal measure—by federal statute it limited hours and set minimum wages.

The Social Security Act of 1935 really belongs to the era of the first New Deal rather than the second. Its many limitations reflect that. By 1938 official proposals were being put forward to strengthen it and some changes were made. As originally passed, its unemployment insurance section was only first-cousin to a federal measure. It merely brought pressure on the states to enact unemployment insurance laws. The state measures, taking their pattern from the federal act, have the latter's faults. They exclude some of the largest classes of workers, among them agricultural and domestic labour. They pay very low benefits for very short periods. They provide for no contributions by state or federal governments, by which alone adequate benefits can be assured.

Weak as it was the Social Security Act secured results. Before the act of 1935 not one southern state had an unemployment insurance law. Indeed, only one in the North had, Wisconsin. By March, 1937, 12 out of 13 southern states, Florida excepted, had enacted unemployment insurance measures in conformity with the Social Security Act.²⁹ It took only 18 months after a federal act was passed to obtain social insurance laws in the southern states.

That part of the Social Security Act providing for assistance to states for old age pensions, and aid to dependent children and the blind, also was beneficial. By May, 1938, all southern states but Virginia were operating on a plan for old age assistance approved by the Social Security Board. Before the Act, only Kentucky had a pension law, and that was nominal. Eight southern states had qualified to receive help for dependent children, and nine to receive aid for the blind. Eight states were operating under all three plans.³⁰

Only the old age annuities part of the Social Security Act can be spoken of as a truly federal measure, affecting all parts of the country alike without the necessity for fresh action by the several states. The annuities originally planned to begin in 1942 are small and inadequate, they are unfairly based upon previous earnings, but at least they provide federal regulation of a nationwide problem. They are a lesson in the way the problem must be handled if the South is to be helped.

Other New Deal measures touched the South at vital points. The "soil conservation" act, devised to replace temporarily the outlawed AAA, was later followed by the comprehensive farm act of 1938. What the latter could do was limited by the Supreme Court decision on the original AAA. It continued the soil conservation principle and provided commodity loans. A marketing quota feature was incorporated for certain crops, among them cotton, to give the government some handle by which to control the problem. A two-thirds vote of the farmers raising the crops was required to put the marketing quota plan into effect. Cotton farmers favoured it overwhelmingly. Thereby they agreed to take the quotas allocated to them and to pay a tax on every pound they tried to sell above their assigned quotas. Small farmers, tenants and sharecroppers apparently were given more consideration and protection than under earlier measures: there is a limit below which small producers' quotas may not be reduced; beginning in 1939, no person in any one state may be paid more than \$10,000; landlords may not increase their payments by displacing tenants and sharecroppers, and so on.³¹

In 1938-1939 an alarming situation developed due to the unprecedented drop in cotton exports to the lowest figure in more than 50 years. Moreover the unused stocks of cotton held in storage in mid-summer 1938 were some 13,650,000 bales, an amount equivalent to a whole year's consumption. Only by government action was this surplus prevented from having a disastrous effect on cotton prices.³² Still the problem remains acute.

By the time some New Deal measures came along a coalition had emerged in Congress able to combat them. Bills to expand the housing program, provide federal aid to education, and set up a federally aided health program were blocked. All were measures greatly needed in the South.

CHAPTER IX. DIVISIONS AND ISSUES

The Emergence of Conflicting Interests

From the start the political relation of the New Deal to the South was a peculiar one. Being a Democratic Party administration, presumably it would be backed by the same old "solid" bloc, including the southern delegation in Congress. Yet here it was, unmistakably a liberal administration, even going so far in the time of acute crisis as to advocate federal legislation to deal with the day's pressing social and economic problems. Here indeed was a dilemma for traditional states'-rights Dixie. Government aid to business had long been tolerated. But among the New Deal measures were some touching labour and farmer welfare, which, because they were applicable to the whole nation, might be a powerful lever for pulling the "backward" South's standards more nearly up to par. This certainly was not what old-guard southern Democrats were looking for.

It was, however, what the labour and other progressive forces down South were looking for. They had never had the strength to get more than a fraction of the protective and welfare legislation that they wanted on the statute books. With the readiness of the New Deal to put forward federal measures, our people now could be aided by the stronger forces of liberal and labour movements up North. Southern labour stood to gain far more even than northern, by whatever federal social measures could be got through.

It was of no little moment to the farmers and workers of Dixie, therefore, when the New Deal took cognisance of the demands of these groups, in particular of their insistence upon a

federal relief program, wage and hour legislation, and recognition of the right to collective bargaining. Here were measures touching southern workers at the point of their most acute grievances.

Even our farming people, unorganised and inarticulate though most of them were at the time the New Deal came, found filtering down and spreading among them the expectation that the New Deal would bring them a better life.

What would be the outcome when it dawned upon the people that the New Deal measures from which they had reason to expect benefits, were being mutilated, circumvented and even opposed outright by the special-privilege groups in southern business and public life? Would not popular groups oppose those who got between them and the measures the New Deal proposed?

Not at once did the bitterness of the opposition to the progressive features of the New Deal program make itself evident. In the first year or two, both in the North and South, it was smouldering, held in check by the crisis. It was when the worst danger had passed and economic conditions were somewhat improved over the black days of early 1933 that the antagonism of the nation's powerful reactionary bloc broke out into open and sustained hostility. This was true even for the southern wing of the reactionary group, though being in the anomalous position of wanting to have its cake and eat it too, it was somewhat slower to reveal its open opposition.

Obviously ruling southern Democracy was happy to have its party back in the political saddle in Washington, with all that meant of patronage and prestige and power. Undoubtedly it thought that the New Deal, like other Democratic Party administrations, would play ball with its southern bloc, and of course that happened in many matters. Chagrined though these southern conservatives must have been with the labour and liberal measures sponsored by the New Deal, they made a virtue of necessity and appeared to go along with the Administration in

those sobering days of 1933. But we cannot doubt from what subsequent events have shown, that they resolved forthwith, insofar as possible, to make the manifestations of the New Deal program conform to traditional southern ways. Belonging to the party in power, they were in a strategic position to get their way on many matters. Here is one key to understanding why the first New Deal, faltering and faulty in any case in its promotion and protection of the general welfare, made a far poorer showing below Mason and Dixon's line than elsewhere.

But not by any means did the business-minded forces have everything their own way. Some of the early benefits of the Roosevelt Administration did penetrate to the southern people and line them up on the side of the New Deal. Southern workers resisted employers' attempts to get around these provisions, and in some industries put up a sustained fight to wring from New Deal measures the conditions that were their due. The widespread struggles during the period, the general textile strike, the strikes of miners led by the United Mine Workers of America, of steel workers and even of sharecroppers, show this. Signs multiplied that there was a growing body of Southerners actively dissenting from traditional reactionary rule.

Even during the first New Deal, therefore, there had begun to take place a division over its policies, a clear conflict of counterposed interests. Seeking to defeat its liberal intent and to turn the measures to their own interest, were the powerful conservative group, active both at home and through their representatives in Washington. Seeking to implement it and extend its provisions was a rising movement, up from the people, as yet not very strong, which only as it grew to involve large numbers and became crystallised into effective organisation, could do much against the influence of the old entrenched group.

The Lines Are Further Drawn

By the autumn of 1935 when the first New Deal drew to its close, the economic and political scene generally was in a turmoil. One after another, various New Deal measures had been invalidated by the Supreme Court. The NRA, the original AAA, the Guffey Coal Act, all had been demolished. Direct federal relief was ended, the "unemployables" being returned to the mercy of state and local government. Only work relief received federal aid.

The plan of reactionary America to defeat the New Deal was being perfected. The American Liberty League had been organised at the behest of Republican and tory Democratic forces. A group of similar mold within the Democratic Party were the so-called "Jeffersonian Democrats." (What an anomaly, this use of the name of the great democrat!) Eugene Talmadge, then Governor of Georgia, sought to draw around himself dissident southern elements of Liberty League sympathy.

It was not any specific New Deal act that occasioned this mounting antagonism of the big business group, although there were many specific grievances. Essentially, what the business interests could not tolerate was the general liberal tendency of the New Deal, even though it repeatedly made plain its thorough-going belief in private profit enterprise. They sought to displace the New Deal Administration with one completely subservient to their special interests.

This converging of the forces bent upon defeating all liberalising trends had one very wholesome effect. To be sure it did not halt all the vacillations of the New Deal, though it seems to have put a brake on the pendulum. It did have a crystallising influence upon liberal and labour sentiment. It began to drive these various groups toward acting together for their common good.

As the presidential election of 1936 approached, organised labour in particular saw that if it was not to find itself com-

pletely at the mercy of our country's extreme anti-labour elements in the seat of government, it must throw all its strength behind the liberal Roosevelt candidacy for the presidency. The stakes were high. Workers everywhere were still suffering from the terrible effects of the economic crisis and depression of 1929-33. They must anticipate a concerted attack on trade unions and living standards if a reactionary government got into power. They could expect at least a fair hearing for labour and general welfare measures if the New Deal won. The AFL and the newly organised CIO, especially the latter, threw themselves into the effort to defeat the reactionary candidate, Landon, and to re-elect President Roosevelt. So prominent was the part played by labour, and so decisive was Landon's defeat, that the entire country perforce regarded the outcome as a great victory for the organised labour movement. Workers everywhere doubly rejoiced in the election because they felt that they had ward off a threatening disaster.

But labour and liberal groups were not well enough organised to consolidate their victory. Even if they had developed a cohesive organisation they would have been in a difficult position. Not a few men before the 1936 elections wore New Deal masks, and then began to discard them when they felt they could afford to. Instead of the overwhelming New Deal majority that the country thought it had elected some of our erstwhile New Dealers were found openly moving over to the other side.

It does not prove anything to go back to show that these men had sometimes voted for New Deal measures. Of course they did when it was politically foolhardy for them to do anything else. After all, they belonged to the Democratic Party, the party in power. That party was being run by a New Deal Administration. When it was still a question of getting patronage rights, or of riding back into office on the wave of New Deal popularity, they let their antagonism simmer along. They still do on specific measures if pressure from their constituents is

sufficiently sharp. If the progressive people back in the communities were a compact political unit they could still force some of these men to live up to their pre-election pretensions.

The true situation became apparent by the beginning of the New Deal's second term. The occasion was the all-important issue of reforming the Supreme Court.

The actions of the highest court in making void measures which had been enacted by overwhelming vote of Congress, backed by the great majority of the American voters, created great dismay. Which way indeed could the people turn on legislation for general welfare, if the only effective method, Congressional action, was barred? I am concerned here not so much with the method chosen by the Roosevelt Administration for effecting Supreme Court reform, that of enlarging the court, but with the storm that developed around it. Let us have no illusions, the pious attitude of the forces opposing the reform bill was so much pose. They would have fought any proposal, no matter what, that threatened to break the grip of conservative control.

Against the court reform plan the Republican opposition groups massed all their strength. They found not a little of it coming from the Democratic side. They even drew to themselves some who had hitherto had a liberal reputation.

The New Deal lost its court reform bill, but in the end it did not lose its fight. By resignations and the President's subsequent appointments, we seem to be assured of a liberal majority. So the decisions to date suggest.

That the opponents did not give up their fight was seen in the case of Justice Hugo Black. It was a great misfortune that one of our few truly liberal southern leaders was ever associated in any way with the notorious Ku Klux Klan. We welcomed his radio address denouncing bigotry and all its works. And since his accession to the court his actions have been enlightened and progressive.¹ It was he who wrote the decision of the court in February, 1939, sending the case of a Negro back to the

Louisiana courts because Negroes had been systematically excluded from the jury rolls.

That he should have been attacked by the opponents of court reform on the score of his one-time Klan affiliation is truly ironical, when we consider the source. If Justice Black had been a man of real Klansman stripe, intolerant and reactionary, I am certain we should have found many of his attackers ready to welcome him to the court with warm praise.

We do not have any roll-call record of votes on the original New Deal proposal. It did not come to that. We know that some of the men who stood out against it were Southerners. Vice-president Garner, say Rhylick and Michie, was strongly opposed.² We also know that in a Congress with an overwhelming Democratic majority elected to carry out a New Deal program, the plan to reform the Supreme Court had no chance at all.

The fight to block court reform showed us what to expect. Month by month thereafter the lines of cleavage became more clearly drawn. By the time of the 1938 elections the opposition to the New Deal within the Democratic Party was open for all to see. Some men who ran for office did try a little camouflage; they would not be "dictated to" by the New Deal, so they said, although they "approved" many of its policies. Others took the line of open attack. Some wore sheep's clothing until the elections were over. The tactics adopted were dictated by expediency. The number whose records show them to be liberal Congressmen, wholeheartedly behind labour and welfare measures, has dwindled alarmingly.

Does this mean that the American people after all were not behind a genuine New Deal policy in 1936 and 1938? That is anything but true. Every reliable sign showed an overwhelming majority among the mass of people favouring reforms. Why then this anomalous situation?

Whatever the future may hold, a reshuffling of political party affiliations had not taken place in 1938. Reactionaries were not

all in one party and liberals and progressives in another. The Republican Party remained the party of big capital. Yet there were other elements in it too. It still retained some part of the Negro vote, though even in 1938, and for a time after, there was very naturally a strong trend among Negro voters toward the New Deal. It still had some traditional support from middle western farm states. Aware of the temper of the times, it tried to win farm and independent votes by putting a mask of pseudo-liberalism on some of its candidates who behind the scenes were backed by the most anti-liberal elements. This latter attempt we can expect it to make again.

Similarly, the Democratic Party, led though it was by a liberal man, was still a strange mixture of liberalism and extreme conservatism, the latter rooted especially in the South.

Democratic Congressmen, like Republican Congressmen, are still selected in most instances not really by popular choice but by political machines. This is as true of the South as anywhere else. In some places the labour and liberal movements organised themselves into bodies politically strong enough and discriminating enough to nominate a genuinely liberal man, a man of principle with a proved concern for the welfare of all the people. In most places the machine nominated the man, and if necessary dressed him up in liberal garb to win the progressive vote. It takes a well-developed, mature progressive movement to weed out the many bogus liberals who seek to use popular sentiment for their own and the machine's advancement. The progressive movement in the United States had not reached that stage except in a few places.

After the defeat of the bill for Supreme Court reform, the New Deal found it must expect opposition, even on important welfare measures, from a crystallising bloc of southern Democrats. It also saw on the fringes of this bloc some who for various reasons were very uncertain quantities, blowing successively hot and then cold. WPA appropriations were a reliable test on the whole of the liberal versus the extreme conservative,

the man with business class psychology versus the man who on principle or considerations of political expediency placed popular welfare first. The goats began to separate themselves from the sheep at the start of the second New Deal. (It later turned out that some black sheep had for a time remained in the flock.) In June, 1937, two amendments were proposed to the WPA appropriation bill in the Senate; both sought to put upon local communities a large percentage of the burden of WPA costs. One would have supposed that the Senators had learned under Hoover what this would mean in depriving the neediest communities of relief and cutting down relief in others. Southern communities would have suffered most of all. The proposals were a direct contradiction of New Deal policy.

Fortunately the amendments did not pass. But some eight or nine southern Democrats voted for them. And they continued to take the same position as similar measures came up from time to time. When in early 1939 the President requested a WPA relief appropriation estimated by experts to be the minimum on which relief needs could be met, both House and Senate cut down the appropriation by a large sum. There was no roll-call vote in the House. In the Senate the cut was made possible only by the aid of southern Democrats. Virtually the same men voted for a relief cut in 1939 who voted against the New Deal on the 1937 relief issue. Most of their names are familiar now as men who frequently opposed New Deal measures: Glass and Byrd of Virginia, George and Russell of Georgia, Ellison D. Smith of South Carolina (Smith was absent from the 1937 vote, but he voted for the slash in 1939), Harrison of Mississippi, Bailey of North Carolina. In 1937 Reynolds of North Carolina voted with the New Deal on the relief amendments (the Reynolds who once made such astonishing remarks in the Senate on the fascist countries).³ In 1939 he voted in favour of the relief cut.⁴

A wage and hour bill had been urged by President Roosevelt ever since the demise of the NRA. Labour regarded it as

its number one "must" measure. Not until 1938 were New Deal forces able to get the Act adopted. All during 1937 it was under consideration and the Senate even passed a bill. It is encouraging to record that a number of southern Senators voted for the 1937 measure, some 13, according to the record. It certainly shows how strongly southern labour had worked for it. But there were 10 southern Senators against the bill. Of these, seven were men who had voted against adequate relief. On the House side the 1937 bill was lost by a motion to recommit. The vote was 216-198. One hundred of the 216 votes that killed the bill were southern.⁵ When finally the Fair Labour Standards Act of 1938 was passed, it was over the objection of a determined southern opposition. Some of the weak features of the Act resulted from concessions forced into the measure by the Southerners.*

Southerners had a part in the defeat of the President's re-organisation bill. This is noteworthy, not because of the terms of the proposal, but because it was made the occasion for fighting the New Deal.

Actions of reactionary southern Congressmen in the summer of 1939 rounded out the record. Clinching their coalition with the almost solid Republican bloc, they crushed the 1939 "lending-spending" bill and the crucial housing expansion measure. New names gained anti-New Deal fame. Woodrum of Virginia won notoriety for his unrelenting fight for the 1939 Relief Bill that came to bear his name, whose terms met the combined disapproval and resistance of AFL, CIO, railroad brotherhoods and Workers Alliance bodies, not to mention

* I have not mentioned the Anti-Lynching Bill because properly speaking, it has not been made a test of New Deal adherence. Of course it is a test of real liberalism. On successive anti-lynching measures we have invariably had an almost "solid" South—in Congress, not in Dixie. In 1937, the time of a notorious filibuster, a few roll-of-honour Southerners stood for the bill, more power to them. In the Senate there were four or five, among them Senator Pepper of Florida and the two Senators from Oklahoma. In the House there were nine or ten. That was all.

large numbers of middle class organisations and individuals. By it the prevailing wage was lost, the Theatre Project abandoned and other arts projects cut, and workers on WPA more than 18 months automatically dropped regardless of their need. Howard W. Smith, also of Virginia, fathered a House investigation of the National Labor Relations Board, even though volumes of testimony had already been taken on the Board's work in both Senate and House by the regularly constituted Congressional committees. Smith's own labour record speaks volumes: during his stay in Congress he has opposed the National Labor Relations Act and the Fair Labor Standards Act, favoured the investigation of sit-down strikes, and, besides his NLRB resolution, sponsored one to investigate the Wage and Hour Administration.⁶ Representative Barden of North Carolina, with the experienced support of Georgia's Representative Cox, made every possible effort to secure crippling amendments to the Fair Labor Standards Act. These men were chief among the Southerners to gain new limelight while the old names lost none of their lustre.

It is not possible to explain the acts of such men simply by saying "Southerner." There is more than one kind of Southerner in Congress. Those who look behind the scenes into the background and interests of such men—we find a number of them pictured in their setting in the pages of *Dixie Demagogues* by Rhylick and Michie⁷—would, I venture to say, in many instances be surprised at the ways in which they depart from the conventional picture. True enough, these men retain many traits of the traditional agrarian South, but with them they have acquired other interests and characteristics far from typical of a bygone day.

Take the case of John Nance Garner, as the authors of *Dixie Demagogues* reveal him. Certainly none would say that the Garner who by some has been put forward as presidential timber, does not suggest the old South in many of his ways, with perhaps a special fillip that we associate with Texans. But

also we learn of him, "Hearst is still behind Garner"; "Henry Ford has also put the seal of approval on the Garner candidacy." They say that Republican National Committeeman R. B. Craeger of Texas has said of Garner that "he holds views fundamentally in accord with the Republican party"; "even silver-shirted William Dudley Pelley's 'Liberator' has supported the Garner cause," much to the embarrassment of Mr. Garner's campaign manager. Among Garner's close associates and friends are listed, "Ralph Morrison, one time ruler of the Texas utility empire.... Old John W. Carpenter of Galveston, president of the Texas Power & Light Co. . . ;" also northern monied men, "Sun Oil's millionaired head, Joseph N. Pew... ;" the comparatively unknown Mike Benedum, bigtime promoter of wildcat oil wells and one of the twelve richest men in the country"; also Roy Miller, "lifelong friend and ringmaster of his presidential show," who is lobbyist for the Texas Gulf Sulphur Co., according to Rhylick and Michie, "one of the most complete monopolies in the world." On his own part Garner is a banker and huge landholder.⁸ As for his labour record, John L. Lewis left no questions unanswered about that, in the terse remarks he made with such dramatic force before the House Labor Committee on July 27, 1939. He is the "genesis of this campaign against labour in the House of Representatives," said Mr. Lewis. But "... he will never achieve the presidency of this republic by baiting labour and seeking to debase Americans."⁹

Consider the fact that New Deal federal measures might have gone far to pull the South out of the slough of a low-wage, unorganised section, might even have raised the economic level of the depressed sharecroppers, might eventually have undercut the wage differential suffered by the Negro, as well as undermined the conditions of his disfranchisement. But these things comprise the economic basis on which exploitation of the South can be carried on so profitably at the present time. Couple the rôle that has been played by the southern anti-New

Dealers in Congress with the adamant opposition of the entire manufacturing, banker, and business class of the South—and the North—to New Deal reforms, and we begin to see the significance of the part these southern Congressmen filled during the years of the second New Deal.

We could pile up evidence of the split in the southern delegation in Congress and the increasingly open antagonism of the anti-New Deal bloc. On only one set of measures, namely, farm legislation, could the President count on all of his southern party members with a fair degree of certainty. To oppose such measures was one political risk that men from an agrarian region like the South dared not run.

As the second New Deal progressed it became plain that in the ranks of reactionary southern Democrats old sectional and party loyalties had ceased to have real meaning. For all practical purposes that was so, although of course the worn-out labels were kept. These Southerners no longer tried to hide their essential homogeneity in aim and outlook with their old-time adversaries of the North who opposed the progressive features of the New Deal. Repeatedly we read in our newspapers words like these in the *New York Times* of February 3, 1939: "The wage differential amendment . . . was voted by the House two weeks ago during the revolt staged by Southern Democrats, aided by the Republicans." It came to be a common spectacle to see Republican Congressmen sitting smugly back in their seats while some of their southern Democratic Party colleagues, who saw eye-to-eye with them, waged their common anti-New Deal battle.

We perforce must wonder how many southern Democrats in Congress ever were for a liberal New Deal program. The mass of southern people were for it. Labour and other progressive groups were plainly behind it. But that was far from true of those who held public office, Democrats though they were. In Congress the Republican Party opposition, itself virulently anti-New Deal, was able to count upon a large bloc of

southern Democrats when it came to fighting Administration measures. In 1939 the New Deal still had a small band of Senators and Representatives from the South who were consistent supporters. As matters stood, however, the anti-New Deal wing of the southern delegation was able to wield a balance of power on the side of extreme conservatism. Together with a few tory Democrats from other sections, it brought just enough strength to the Republican opposition on several occasions to stop progress in its tracks.

Roosevelt Looks at the South

How much of this the New Deal saw is a question. Certainly New Deal leaders took steps which if they had been vigorously followed through would have greatly helped labour and liberal people in the South to bring about the needed changes.

Under the first New Deal southern workers and farming people had got their first real taste of what federal legislation—in contrast to state legislation or no legislation—could do to alleviate their distressing conditions. The second New Deal continued these benefits. We cannot doubt that the program taken as a whole won the mass of Southerners to its warm support.

In early 1938 the New Deal began to address itself directly to southern problems. In March, President Roosevelt made his extraordinary speech on the public square of Gainesville, Ga. He said, "Georgia and the lower South may just as well face facts—simple facts presented in the lower South by the President of the United States. The purchasing power of the millions of Americans in this whole area is far too low. Most men and women who work for wages in this whole area get wages which are far too low." Again, "Let us well remember that buying power means many other kinds of better things—better schools, better health, better hospitals, better highways. These things will not come to us in the South if we oppose

progress—if we believe in our hearts that the feudal system is still the best system. When you come down to it, there is little difference between the feudal system and the fascist system. If you believe in the one, you lean to the other." Finally he said, "To those in and out of public office who still believe in the feudal system . . . the people of the United States and in every section of the United States are going to say, 'We are sorry, but we want people to represent us whose minds are cast in the 1938 mould and not in the 1898 mould.'"¹⁰

This was a new message for a President of the United States or any other public man to give to the people of the South. On the part of some it aroused great hope, on the part of others profound bitterness and fear. If implemented it could change the whole face of the South.

Late in June, 1938, Harry Hopkins, then WPA Administrator, announced that by direction of the President wages were to be raised for some 500,000 WPA workers in 13 southern states. The increases ranged from \$4 to \$11 per month. Hereafter, Mr. Hopkins said, no one who works in the WPA would receive less than \$1 a day in any part of the country. "We have felt for some time that our security wages in certain areas of the country were based on a standard of living below the levels of health and decency...."¹¹

In early July the President carried the southern question a step further. Speaking before a conference of southern leaders in Washington he pointed to the South as the nation's number one economic problem, and thereupon declared he was putting the nation's facilities at the disposal of the South to help solve this problem. Only a week or two before, the President had directed his National Emergency Council to prepare a report on the economic condition of the South.

The slogan, "nation's number one economic problem," was caught up everywhere. The reactions to it were varied. Southern New Dealers rejoiced that their problems were at last coming to the attention of the country at large. The southern anti-New

Deal bloc found itself in a quandary, for how could it oppose the generous proffers of aid that the President's interest implied?

In August, 1938, Mr. Hopkins made another announcement. He pledged part-time aid to needy farmers as President Roosevelt's first effort in a "frontal attack" on southern problems. "I believe . . . as a matter of permanent policy the head of every farm family whose income is inadequate should be given employment a few months each year to supplement his agricultural income." President Roosevelt was determined, he said, "with the aid of like-minded people in the South, to overcome the forces which retarded the development of the South."¹²

We have yet to hear of Mr. Hopkins' proposal being carried out. Even so it was a very interesting admission from a leading government official as to the plight of sharecroppers and farm labourers.

On August 12, 1938, the National Emergency Council's report to the President on the economic condition of the South was made public. This remarkable document was drafted by southern specialists and supervised by an advisory committee of Southerners; it could not possibly be criticised in the South as something alien and antagonistic. Nor could it rightly be criticised by non-Southerners. It is a valuable piece of work, objective and soundly factual.

Meanwhile the New Deal was undertaking its most publicised action on the South. In the middle of 1938 there began the so-called "purge." It was a term of opprobrium, of course, invented by anti-New Dealers with the hope of discrediting the President. I consider irrelevant the criticisms hurled at the Administration during this controversy. No one could be so naïve as to think that they were made in the public interest. However mixed the New Deal motives may have been, the end sought was admirable. President Roosevelt's outspoken advocacy of liberalism and liberal men was one of the most constructive efforts he made in behalf of the South.

It is true George of Georgia and E. D. Smith of South Caro-

lina won in the 1938 elections. Even though Roosevelt went to those states and asked the voters to send men of liberal bent to Congress in their places, still they won. Why was not that a setback for the liberal cause down South?

Before the 1938 autumn elections there had been the victories of Lister Hill of Alabama and Senator Claude Pepper of Florida. Both of them were outstanding New Deal men running against anti-New Deal men. Both won because they were supported by well-organised popular groups. It is said of Senator Pepper that he never could have secured a majority if the Florida poll-tax law had not lately been repealed, thus permitting many to vote who formerly had been disfranchised by inability to pay the tax. In Senator Hill's case the labour and liberal groups of his district were thoroughly organised and made it a New Deal issue.

It is doubtful if the New Deal really expected its endorsed candidates to win in Georgia and South Carolina. For one thing, labour and liberal coalitions in those states had developed hardly at all.

That was not all. Because George and Smith defeated New Dealers in 1938, must we infer that the majority of the people in those states were anti-liberal, that they preferred to be represented in the United States Senate by men of reactionary bent? Hardly more than 300,000 persons voted in each of the primary elections in which these two men ran, George receiving 141,235 votes, and Smith approximately 178,000. But Georgia has a total of 1,498,000 men and women of voting age, South Carolina 819,000. There is something very significant here. George was elected by a vote of less than 10% of the potential electorate, Smith by not more than 20%.^{*} How can we talk of

* In these states nomination in the Democratic primary is tantamount to election. Hence the vote in the primary is far larger than in the general election that follows, unless the latter is a run-off between two candidates. In the general election in Georgia referred to above only 70,919 votes were cast as compared with over 300,000 in the primary. The figures for persons of voting age are from the Census of 1930. The total would

"majorities" in such a case? In these states where disfranchisement by poll tax and other discriminatory laws is rife, the voice of the vast majority of the people cannot even be heard.

Was it still worth while for liberalism to be made an issue there, for men who took the New Deal stand to run? But is any other means so effective for bringing the issue before the public?

Insofar as there is a political split in the South to-day, it is not a split between candidates. It cuts down to the core of our needs. The South is split as between going backward and going forward. To forward-looking Southerners when the New Deal came it represented progress. It held for them the hope that out of it might come a movement on the part of labour, farming, and progressive people generally, which ultimately could displace the extreme conservatives who have so long been in control of public affairs.

be larger for 1938. (Data on Georgia elections from Georgia Secretary of State; for South Carolina election returns, *The State*, Columbia, S. C., Sept. 1, 1938.)

CHAPTER X. POLITICAL FERMENT

We should remember that dissenting groups are not a new thing in southern politics. Ever since the years after the middle seventies when the old rulers, the so-called Bourbons, regained positions of power, and the new rulers, the rising capitalist class, began to assert themselves, we find evidence of disaffection. At first the farmers were the backbone of dissident movements; not just poor farmers but fairly well-to-do farm owners who even before the war had objected to the concentration of power in the hands of the Black Belt aristocracy. Among the hill farmers who barely managed to scratch a living from the soil there was so much antagonism to the Black Belt that in some states they were centres of strong pro-Union sentiment, and after that of Republican Party strength. All of that is an old story.

Later the mill workers could also be counted among dissident elements so far as the old and new upper classes were concerned. Perhaps those who came down from hill farms to work carried over some of their mistrust. But chiefly I imagine the dissidence was bred of the conditions under which they laboured and lived. In any case it was there. As the working class in the South grew the sense of cleavage between classes became more pronounced.

Changing conditions, following the curve of periodic economic crises, set the stage for clashes between the antagonistic groups. The greed and corruption shown by a rising corporate power aggravated the situation. Most of the clashes were in the economic field. But some were political.

Revolt

In the last decades of the century came the nationwide Populist revolt. The South was in the main stream. Full accounts have been written of the southern manifestations of the movement. New research has shown its sources and wide extent. Woodward's *Tom Watson, Agrarian Rebel*, appearing in 1938, gives a fascinating chapter in the story. As a child I well remember how Tom Watson's name was spoken—by that time the movement of which he was so brilliant a leader was all but dead; but not the feelings, commingled of reluctant admiration, dismay and fear, about this unusual Georgian. He was even then making that tragic turn from the passionately principled mass leader to the "rabble rouser" of racial and religious intolerance. Enough of the original Tom Watson was left in the early 1900's for him to be still an unpopular man in traditional southern circles.

Throughout the period it was primarily a revolt of the farmers. But the farmers were joined by wage-earners who likewise felt the hardships of the recurrent economic crises of the last three decades of the century. They were also joined by the Negro. Some white leaders encouraged the formation of Negro Farmers' Alliances and worked side-by-side with them. Tom Watson did that. We should have to go far to find a clearer sense than he had in those days as he repeatedly called upon Negro and white farmers to work together. "You are kept apart that you may be separately fleeced of your earnings. You are made to hate each other because upon that hatred is rested the key-stone of the arch of financial despotism which enslaves you both. You are deceived and blinded that you may not see how this race antagonism perpetuates a monetary system which beggars both."¹

Southern farmers felt the agricultural depression of those years as did middle western farmers. It was at that time that the sharecropper system was taking a firm hold. Many small

farm owners were unable to keep their heads above water. Their mortgaged lands and homes were lost to the South's new banker and merchant class. Men who had always been independent farmers were pushed down into the class of share-croppers, a status until then suffered only by ex-slaves.² Others who by great sacrifices held their land felt the pinch of depressed conditions. They saw tariff on farm products raised, felt the high rates which railroads forced upon them, saw these same railroad corporations making millions and heard their general corruption exposed.³ The southern farmers like their fellows in other sections lashed out at the accelerating power of the great corporations. In the South also they directed their attacks against the new business class which with ill-concealed ruthlessness was driving small farmers to the wall and making excessive profits out of the labour of industrial wage-earners.

The Southern Farmers' Alliance of the seventies spread rapidly over Dixie. It became the National Farmers' Alliance and Industrial Union of the nineties, and then identified itself in some measure with the People's Party. Even after it was a national movement this Alliance remained chiefly southern; other farm organisations occupied the northern field, and a coloured Alliance embraced most of the Negro membership. In 1890 the southern Alliance had over three million members, Woodward says. In Tom Watson's State of Georgia there were some 100,000 Alliancemen.⁴

It was in 1890 that Alliancemen became especially active in southern politics. They did not follow the same tactics everywhere but adapted their ways to whatever was most likely to assure them an election. Sometimes they ran independent candidates, sometimes they captured their local Democratic Party, or they combined with other organisations. In the southern states in that year they elected three governors, one United States Senator, sent 44 men to the House of Representatives, and controlled five state legislatures.⁵ These successes, and the mass sentiment lying back of them, aroused Democratic Party

strategists to action. By adoption of some of the planks in the Populist platform, and by a judicious splitting of Populist ranks, they hamstrung the independent section of the movement and in the end helped to bring it to defeat. But they did not do so before the movement had reached a high pitch of enthusiastic fervour.

Down South regulation Democrats were thoroughly frightened. The leaders saw political control of the states slipping from their hands. It was moving into the hands of popular forces openly antagonistic to them. They stopped at nothing to defeat or outmanoeuvre the rebels. At election time they used corruption, intimidation, violence, and that highly potent weapon, fear. From first to last the appeal to race prejudice was used to try to whip the white vote back into line. Their battle cry was "white supremacy." With it they were able to overcome what gains had been made in solidarity between Negro and white.⁶ In the end these unprincipled weapons, wielded by men who had great and growing economic power, won out against the Alliancemen.

The next decades saw unrest even though nothing like the revolt of the nineties reappeared. The political upsets apparently suffered by the entrenched minority usually were no more than tweedledum and tweedledee affairs, at least, until the coming of the New Deal. There were occasional local overturns whereby a really liberal man, supported by labour and farm elements, temporarily ousted a tory machine. Most of the striking political shifts were occasioned by the victories of so-called southern "demagogues," men like Ben Tillman of South Carolina, Vardaman of Mississippi, Huey Long of Louisiana.

The "demagogues" were men with many qualities of leadership. They were usually orators and all of them were picturesque. I have heard one or two of them speak and others have been described to me. They knew how to arouse mass sentiment. Of course they had no real program, but they knew what the small farmers' and mill workers' grievances were, and

selected slogans that would win their support. They recognised the class cleavages in our society and skilfully manipulated them untrammelled by principle. They said they were anti-aristocratic, for the "poor man" and against "the rich"; they attacked the "corporate interests." They were ready with quick-result remedies. When in office they actually instituted a number of mild reforms, especially measures for regulating public service corporations, such as railroads and public utilities, and also bills to aid the small farm owner. But also they did not hesitate to create divisions in the ranks of the common people, always a highly suspicious sign. Some of these men, not all, were adepts at playing off whites against blacks. It was a ready stock-in-trade.⁷ They could afford to use this device because the Negro was helpless to retaliate at the polls. This as much as anything about them shows how hopelessly unfit by sound standards of labour and agrarian movement leadership such men were. Until very recent years labour organisations were too undeveloped to push forward their own authentic leadership. Incipient revolts were waylaid and led off down blind alleys.

Among them only Huey Long was a man of big proportions. He went further in all directions, even to launching his national movement, astutely dubbed "Share-the-Wealth" to make "every man a king." Many people failed to take Huey Long very seriously, just as they cannot look upon the vigilante organisations as more than locally annoying. Even when they heard concretely of Long's methods in Louisiana—as plain a lesson as we could ask of his attitude toward ordinary concepts of democracy—they did not quite believe their ears. Even when they saw the response his promises, obviously demagogic in their content, were winning from crowds in many states, especially southern states, they let their disquietude be lulled by his antics.⁸

In the end movements like "Share-the-Wealth" with men of Huey Long's personality and capacities leading them, if anything, offer greater danger than do the more lurid, secret,

"shirted" groups. They have thousands of public platforms made available to them; they reach tens of thousands of hearers over the radio. Insofar as they are given the guise of a socio-political crusade, as "Share-the-Wealth" was, and as Coughlin's "Social Justice" is, they may not only influence men's minds toward issues (along reactionary lines), but their political actions toward specific reactionary candidates. Thereby they directly affect public policy. Therein lies one of their greatest threats.

If they complete the cycle of growth, which Long's movement never did, so that they are turned against labour; if they take a leaf from Hitler's book to become anti-Semitic, or, in the South, anti-Negro; if with this they lend themselves to the service of the great centres of reactionary financial power to be used in the latter's interest against authentic popular movements, then they would be full-fledged fascist in their relations, their methods, their aims.

Though Huey Long died, and his particular movement faded when it had hardly begun, that does not preclude the rise of some other more formidable movement in the South. We cannot escape the fact that "Share-the-Wealth" captured the enthusiasm especially of many southern farmers and poorest folk of the middle classes. To-day as in the years of Long's ascendancy, a profound political unrest pervades the population of the South. It has great potentialities for progress. But a movement of reactionary mould, led by men who really hold the mass of people in contempt, yet know their grievances and fears and make no bones about playing upon them, could, as "Share-the-Wealth" had begun to do, give them golden promises, appeal to their desire for security, and draw many after it toward disaster for themselves and for democracy.

Disfranchisement

There is one paramount factor conditioning any popular political movement of to-day. Unlike their fathers in the South

of the nineties, large numbers of the southern people are now disfranchised. Inevitably as long as this is so it handicaps popular attempts at change. Nowadays disfranchisement may be turning into a boomerang which will whirl back into the faces of those who chose it as a weapon.

True to history, the disfranchised are the people who are most disadvantaged economically and socially. They have the most acute grievances, but they cannot use the suffrage to correct them because it is not theirs to use. Most people are familiar with the fact that the coloured population is for the most part denied the ballot in the South. It is not so well known I think that large numbers of whites are also unable to vote.

Any generalisation about this question must be qualified. The situation is not the same in all states. Some communities within a state make a much better showing than others. The differences often hinge on the kind of local officials found. In some cases these men are notorious for the methods of intimidation they employ against coloured citizens who dare to exercise their Constitutional right to register. They have been known to be insufferably insulting. Enlightened Southerners know of these officials and resent their ways deeply. There are also local officials who are fully as successful in disfranchising the coloured voter but who use more finesse in doing it. Fundamentally their aim is the same. In some cities quite a bloc of coloured voters can be found. Varied conditions account for this. It may be that the local white machine has found it advantageous to admit a limited number of Negroes to the polls, especially if there is a coloured machine boss with whom the white machine can deal. In some places the Negro citizens have made a successful fight to win some measure of recognition. In sections of the border states there is a large Republican vote and restrictions ordinarily put on Negro suffrage are sometimes slackened.

With due respect to these qualifications, which make it not strictly correct to say that no Negroes vote in the South, it becomes very close to quibbling to say anything else. One esti-

mate put the number of registered Negro voters in Georgia at any time in the decade from 1920 to 1930 at 10,000, although the literate Negro population of voting age was 369,000. In Mississippi there were 850 registered coloured voters out of 290,000 who were literate and of age. In Alabama the number was 3,500 out of 269,487.* Even in Macon County, Alabama, where the large Negro college, Tuskegee Institute, is located, and nearly 5,000 Negroes of voting age could read and write, only 22 were registered voters. In Montgomery County, home of the state capital, there were 13,973 literate Negroes of voting age, but only 41 were registered voters.⁹

Attempts to disfranchise the Negro of course have had to skirt around Constitutional guarantees. One of the earliest ways out was the notorious "grandfather clause." Mississippi set a pattern quickly to be followed by other states. Under it white men were allowed to vote who could not satisfy the education or property tests if they had voted in 1867, or if they were Confederate soldiers, or were descended from such voters or

* REGISTRATION STATISTICS FROM MISCELLANEOUS
SOURCES, COMPARED WITH NEGRO
POPULATION AND LITERACY ^a

PLACE	21-YEAR-OLD AND	NEGRO VOTERS
	LITERATE NEGRO POPULATION, 1920	AT ANY TIME, 1920-1930
Alabama	269,487	3,500
Georgia	369,511	10,000 at most
Mississippi	290,782	850
Virginia	248,347	12,000 to 18,000
North Carolina—certain cities		
Asheville	3,360	100 to 200
Durham	3,105	500 to 700
Winston-Salem	9,452	326
South Carolina—certain cities		
Columbia	6,587	175 to 800
Charleston	14,199	500 to 700
Greenville	3,448	45
Spartanburg	3,331	100 to 200

^a Condensed from Table III, Appendix II, Lewinson, *op. cit.*

from Confederate soldiers. By registering before a fixed date they could become voters for life.¹⁰

The most effective recent device is the so-called "white primary." In most southern states nomination in the Democratic primary is tantamount to election. Once that became so the Democratic Party in the several states established party rules excluding Negroes from the primary, and hence for all practical purposes from the right to vote. While that would still leave persons free to vote on some other party ticket in national elections, and for certain non-party local matters like bond issues, before they could qualify for any voting they had to pass certain tests. In 1930 all but one southern state, Kentucky, barred the Negro from the Democratic primary. In eight states, Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina, Texas and Virginia, they were barred by state-wide rule; in the three others, by county rule in most of the counties. South Carolina's rule deserves publicity. Yes, Negroes might enrol in the Democratic Party in the Palmetto State, but to do so they must pass a specified test. They must present an affidavit signed by 10 white men proving that said coloured applicant had voted for Wade Hampton (famous Carolina Confederate General who led white Carolinians to defeat the Reconstruction government) in 1876, and for Democratic nominees ever since.¹¹ Whoever framed the rule certainly had a peculiar sense of humor. Back in 1923 Texas tried to embody the rule to exclude Negroes from the party primary in a state law. The Supreme Court disqualified that. But the right of the party to enforce a rule of its own was left untouched.

Several states have a property test. In Alabama a voter must own 40 acres of land or have paid taxes on real or personal property valued at \$300; in Georgia it is 40 acres or \$500 in property; in Louisiana and South Carolina taxes are required on \$300 worth of property. Some states allow education or "character" alternatives. The education or literacy test exists in eight of the 10 cotton states: Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Mis-

sissippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, and Virginia. This is one of the most effective decrees of all, for its administration is left to local officials. The usual requirement is ability to read and write the Constitution of the United States or of the particular state, and in some states to "understand" or "interpret" it. The interpretation by the prospective Negro voter, it need hardly be added, is not likely to satisfy the local white officials.

There are still other disfranchising devices. That at least is their effect. One makes the process of registration extremely hard—for some. Under Virginia law the applicant must fill out his blank "without aid, suggestion or memorandum." Local officials thereby have all the latitude they could ask to make registration an onerous and befuddling affair. The large Negro college, Hampton Institute, is in Hampton, Va. Patently many highly qualified coloured citizens live there. What a transparent device when white applicants who came to register were given forms with a printed heading, while coloured applicants received forms with no heading at all. That was the system a few years ago.¹²

Little wonder when we see the suffrage hemmed in by these many discriminatory provisions, that the southern states show proportionately such a small vote. Comparisons with northern and western states put us in a very bad light. The usual basis for percentages now that we have woman suffrage is the total population 21 years and over. In northern states on the average 70% or more of the eligible population votes in a presidential election. In 1936, 20 states had a percentage better than that. No state in the Union showed a vote less than 55% effective except southern states. In 10 southern states the vote ranged between 13% and 35%.¹³

These percentages leave out of account literacy tests which are common throughout the South. But even giving us this advantage, most of the southern states showed a vote not ex-

ceeding 35%. In South Carolina and Mississippi it was less than 20%.

Naturally these percentages include the coloured population. Let us see how the southern white population stands. Since coloured citizens are *de facto* disfranchised, to exclude them from the total in reckoning the percentages will give us a fair picture of the standing of the whites. The result shows a deplorable situation. Of the literate white persons of voting age, seven states showed no more than a third voting, in some of these it was less. These seven states were Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Mississippi, South Carolina, Texas and Virginia. Tennessee had over 40%; Louisiana and Florida approximately 50%. Only Kentucky, North Carolina and Oklahoma made a respectable showing of two-thirds or more.¹⁴ These percentages, let us remember, are of white literate persons of voting age.

We need not seek far to find the reason for this condition. In 1938 eight states in the nation required a poll tax for voting. They are the low-ranking southern states whose record is shown above. Louisiana and Florida which score next to the lowest, had poll tax laws until very recently. Among the three states with fairly good records, Kentucky and Oklahoma do not require a poll tax for voting, and North Carolina repealed its law nearly two decades ago.

Southern poll tax laws have a way of requiring back taxes for as much as three years before a voter can qualify. Once the poor man gets behind, he is lost. In Virginia back taxes as well as the current tax must all be paid six months in advance of the election.¹⁵ In Alabama it is worse. The prospective voter under 40 years of age can be made to pay the tax of \$1.50 for every year since he was 21 years old.¹⁶ Incidentally, it is also customary to require payment of the tax several months in advance, and—another device for eliminating unwanted voters—the election officials may demand the poll tax receipt when the voter comes to the polls. Here is one more sieve to

catch the undesirables that may have slipped through the first net.

The cumulative poll tax in effect disfranchises because many do not have the money to pay. Even without the cumulative feature such laws are undemocratic. A \$1 or \$2 annual head tax levied on voters cannot fail to exclude the poorest people. In good times that is a big sum to a southern worker barely able to scrape together enough to feed his family, or to a share-cropper who scarcely sees any cash from one year's end to the next. When a depression comes even those who are better off would tend to get far behind. Of course such a device invites corruption on the part of political machines. Nothing is found easier than to pay up for those who will give or sell the machine their votes.

There is much evidence that poll tax laws have wrought serious havoc. In the ninth Congressional district of Virginia before 1902 over 70% of men of voting age participated in elections; 40 years later after the poll tax law had done its work only 36% participated. In 1896, 64% of the electorate voted in that year's presidential election; in 1904, with the head tax in effect, only 26% voted. In 1920 with Woodrow Wilson, a native son of Virginia, running for the presidency, only 25% of the 520,000 who might have voted for him went to the polls. One would suppose that when women were given the ballot there would have been an increase in the proportion, but in 1920 it had still further declined.¹⁷ Indeed, it is characteristic of the poll tax states to show a sharp falling away in the size of their vote since the poll tax laws went into effect.¹⁸

Comparisons between poll tax states and their neighbours where no such restrictions exist show the devastating rôle of the tax. Maryland on Virginia's northern border does not require a tax on voters; there the voting percentage has remained virtually constant—around 62% since 1896. That is in contrast to Virginia's, which has steadily declined. North Carolina's voting population about equals Virginia's, but with its poll tax

law repealed it shows twice as many voters.¹⁹ The poll tax states together have a total population of voting age of about 12 million. Adjoining them are six states which have no poll tax laws—Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Missouri, Maryland and West Virginia—with a population also totalling about 12 million. In the non-poll tax states in 1936 some 79% of the eligible population voted in the presidential election, as compared with about 24% in the poll tax states.²⁰

No merit lies in the argument often put forward by the poll taxers that the law is needed to bring in school revenue. Southern states to be sure are badly in need of revenue, but the voters' head tax is a failure as a revenue-producer. In Virginia the proceeds of the poll tax amount to less than two cents on the dollar of the state's total education bill.²¹ The Birmingham *Post* claims that Alabama was collecting more in poll taxes in 1869 than it is to-day despite the increase in population and wealth.²² If a poll tax is used for revenue it should be divorced from the suffrage. Massachusetts has a poll tax, but not as a restriction on voting. In 1933 it collected twice as much per capita in poll taxes as did Virginia.²³ Not that we can endorse a poll tax of any kind. Even if it produced large revenues as do some other unsound taxes it would still be undesirable.

The crux of the matter is that the voter's poll tax disfranchises. It was meant to. It was devised in its present form at the same time that other methods were being worked out to exclude the Negro from voting. But the inevitable happened. In the net set out to catch the coloured voter and throw him out was also caught a large body of white labouring people who likewise came to be disqualified.

May it perchance be that those who framed the measures were not averse to this result? Some say there is an absence of direct evidence on that.²⁴ But certainly the danger did not go unnoticed. The laws were not passed without opposition, an opposition that came in particular from what one writer calls "less literate and poorer white counties," and for the very reason

that they feared the laws might work a hardship on them.²⁵ It was from counties like these that the Populist movement of the nineties drew its strength. I do not think it altogether an historical coincidence that our present disfranchising laws framed at the turn of the century came on the heels of this widespread popular revolt. Undoubtedly those who advocated the laws so fervently meant what they said when they urged them as a means of disfranchising the coloured voter. This was the reason usually advanced. But why did they want to disfranchise him? We know they were labouring under emotional stress bred of the experience so bitter to them following 1865. Even these lurid, emotional grounds on which disfranchisement of the Negro was demanded cannot be taken entirely at their face value. They simply do not stack up with the use made by these same men of the Negro vote—where they could purchase or otherwise get the use of deceived and ignorant elements—to try to defeat the Alliancemen of the nineties at the polls. Who was it sought disfranchisement? Those in the van of the movement were the extreme conservatives in the South, the new business class among them. They realised that the Negro people in the long run would stand for liberal policies since their interests would run in that direction. On purely rational grounds, why would the southern conservatives not wish to eliminate this large body of potentially liberal voters if they could? And by the same token might they not be willing to cut down the votes of the mass of white men who so lately had nearly upset their control? I do not think it is straining a point to suggest this explanation.

In the last few years two southern states, Alabama and Virginia, have seen a lively campaign to abolish the tax on voting. In both of them there has been no mincing of words on either side as to the opposition's attitudes. The Birmingham *Age-Herald* tells us, "Many believe . . . it would be dangerous to let that portion of the people known as 'labour' vote its full strength. Even more are sure it would never do to let the Negro

vote full strength no matter what educational qualifications should be set....” The paper adds, “When you consider the number of Southern people disfranchised by the poll tax and the number inadequately represented because of a county unit voting system or the ‘rotten boroughs’ mentioned, you can hardly call it ‘government by the people’ at all in a great part of the South.”²⁶ A Montgomery *Advertiser* editorial is amazingly outspoken in its fear of enfranchising the mass of people. “The immediate removal of the cumulative feature of the poll tax burden would arm the dispossessed with a political power that the responsible (sic) citizens cannot afford to grant.... The repeal of this article would invest the pauperised thousands of our people with the balance of power in Alabama politics.” This was said in 1938.²⁷ Again, “In Alabama’s storied and politically talented Black Belt [the seat of the planter bloc] they will tell you in all earnest that they are natural governors and that it is better for the state as a whole to leave them with the advantage given them by failure to reapportion legislative representation as the constitution requires. They honestly don’t believe it wise to let north Alabamans vote their full strength.” [North Alabama is predominantly a region of small farms.]²⁸ The Birmingham *Post*, a plain-spoken campaigner for reform, points up the issue in no uncertain terms. “Make no mistake. This is a brazen device by which reactionary interests seek to retain control long after the mass of voters have moved forward to a more progressive stand.” The argument that the cumulative poll tax is “to keep a certain racial element from voting,” it says, “is so much camouflage.”²⁹

In Virginia they see the issue in these same terms. The *Southern Planter* says of it, “It has struck with devastating force the farmer vote; with deadly accuracy, the lately admitted woman vote; with utmost damage to the state, the labour vote. ... It paved a sure highway to an office-holding oligarchy and provided all the essentials for ‘machine’ dominated elections.” A Virginian, writing to the Richmond *Times-Dispatch*, speaks

bitterly of the state's machine. "The poll tax is the method by which the oligarchy or the aristocracy, or in plainer words, the old line organisation politicians, keep their hold upon Virginia. As long as they can use this tax to keep from voting those who are not of their faith, they can maintain their strangle-hold upon every remunerative office, upon the finances of the State, and upon its political complexion."³⁰ More judiciously put, but no less pointed, is the appraisal of a southern journalist. "The political leaders often favour retention of the levy, since those who have been chosen by a limited electorate naturally prefer not to risk the uncertainty of a contest in which thousands of new voters take part. Again, those interests which prefer to see political power remain in the hands of the 'upper crust' of propertied voters, rather than in those of the masses, likewise back the status quo."³¹

Rebellion Against Disfranchisement

The extreme conservative wing that so largely dominates the South politically quite evidently fears for its control if the mass of people who are disfranchised should win the vote. There are other considerations, but this is the central one. That answers the question, Who wants the poll tax kept and why? There is then the other question, Who wants the poll tax to go? Is it a small or large group? Is it representative or unrepresentative? Is it influential or insignificant? Is it making headway or is it futile to expect a change?

"From Harper's Ferry to the mesas fringing the Rio Grande a revolt is brewing against the poll tax. The strength of the movement varies in each of the eight Southern States which retains the levy as a prerequisite to voting, but it is definitely a movement." So says Virginian Dabney, Virginia publicist, in the *New York Times Magazine*, February 12, 1939.

Organised labour demands it. Every State Federation of Labor in the poll tax states is on record for repeal. In Tennessee,

Texas, Virginia and Alabama labour has pushed campaigns for repeal.³² The CIO unions since their formation have become active in the campaign. At its national convention in 1938 the Congress of Industrial Organizations favoured abolition of the voter's poll tax, and similar action has been taken in the several southern states. The new Textile Workers Union of America (CIO) at its convention in Philadelphia in May, 1939, adopted a resolution introduced by the large southern delegation calling for abolition of the poll tax on voting. Labor's Non-Partisan League has gone on record against the poll tax. In Tennessee, AFL and CIO unions and railroad brotherhoods met in a state conference for progressive legislation out of which came a drive for a petition signed by tens of thousands calling upon President Roosevelt and Congress to enact a federal uniform registration law abolishing the poll tax and other restrictions on the right to vote.³³

We should expect sentiment among farmers to crystallise more slowly, but it has been growing. Organised farmers have spoken, and there is considerable sentiment evident among those not organised. Alabama's up-country section has let the Black Belt know it wants a change. Southern members of the United Cannery, Agricultural, Packing and Allied Workers (CIO), among them large numbers of sharecroppers and farm labourers, have carried on some work against the poll tax in Arkansas, Virginia and, to some extent, in Texas. At the request of its southern state divisions, the national Farmers Union at its 34th annual convention in 1938 adopted a resolution urging support of the southern members in their fight against poll tax laws. State branches of the Farmers Union in Louisiana, Arkansas, Texas and Alabama especially have actively engaged in work for repeal. The Virginia Grange has "thrown the weight of its vast influence behind the fast-growing movement." So says the Richmond press.³⁴

Some sections of the southern press are supporting the campaign. Items already quoted show that. When the Birmingham

Post says flatly, "There can be no true democracy in the South so long as the poll tax remains," it is a propitious sign.³⁵

Numerous middle-class groups are now moving in the full stream of reform. In Virginia we find the Consumer's League, League of Women Voters, Business and Professional Women's Clubs, Veterans of Foreign Wars and other organisations joining with labour and the Grange.³⁶ Alabama's State Parent-Teachers Association became an advocate. Here, says the Birmingham *Post*, is seen "the temper of the average citizen of Alabama"; the people are "overwhelmingly" in favour of the reform.³⁷ In January, 1939, the Southern Policy Committee meeting in Atlanta declared unanimously for the abolition of poll tax laws.³⁸ The Committee is a body of southern leaders from all walks of life. The newly formed Southern Conference for Human Welfare at its remarkable gathering in November, 1938, in which was reflected every sector of southern popular opinion, passed a plainspoken resolution demanding federal and state legislation to abolish the poll tax.

Besides all these groups made up predominantly of white Southerners there is the Negro. Negroes have voiced their sentiments against disfranchising laws countless times and through countless organisations and groups. To-day they are becoming more articulate than ever before. Typical of the new spirit was the conference of southern Negro youth held in April, 1938, at Chattanooga. Four hundred delegates represented some 383,000 coloured young people from varied groups and communities. Churches, student organisations, civic bodies, trade unions, were there. "We came to organise the Negro youth in the struggle for the right to vote," said Mr. Edward Strong, executive secretary of the Congress. "The Southern Negro Youth Congress proposes to throw its full force behind the fight for the recognition of the manhood rights of the Negro people to vote."³⁹

It would be unthinkable not to include the Negro people among the popular groups demanding enfranchisement. But do

southern white people themselves include them? Are Negroes being made a part of the movement, are their demands integrated with the general popular demands? I cannot answer these questions categorically. In some communities and in some campaigns they are being included. We must admit the danger, however, that the forces working for poll tax repeal may in some cases seek to sidestep this issue.

More than once I have encountered the following argument: "As for the maintenance of 'white supremacy,' they [the repeal group] are unable to see that this issue is important any longer. Is white supremacy endangered in North Carolina, which has nearly a million Negroes, and which abolished the poll tax in 1920? In that State every registrant for voting must demonstrate to the registrar his ability to 'read and write any section of the Constitution in the English language.' Under this arrangement hundreds of thousands of formerly disfranchised whites are exercising their right to vote, whereas the number of Negro participants in the elections remains small."⁴⁰ What is this argument saying? "We work for poll tax repeal but the question of Negro suffrage need not arise. It need not because we would still have the other restrictions upon the suffrage. It is shown in the case of North Carolina that the Negro, despite repeal of the poll tax, still remains disfranchised." I am afraid that is its substance.

We cannot know how representative is this view. The campaign has not gone far enough. If the mistake is being made there is still time to rectify it. Meantime let us try to understand why there could be such a mistake.

Hard as it may be for a Northerner to see it, the appeal to "white supremacy" still has a certain potency in the South. People do not actually have to feel fear themselves to be affected by it. Those who are only beginning to think in liberal terms might easily tend to favour what seems a more safe and expedient course. Even the most level-headed progressive may feel himself becoming nervous if he hears that some old-fash-

ioned, ear-splitting, thoroughly unprincipled politician is about to go on the rampage about defending "white supremacy" from the "black menace." Some very evil and terrible things have been perpetrated under the sway of that disgraceful reactionary battle-cry. We know how Hitler has let loose dreaded pogroms against the Jewish people in Germany by lashing out against them as the "Jewish menace." So racism among us has been used to victimise the southern people.

Frequently it is used in political campaigns, all too often in time of labour conflict. "White supremacy" has been the rallying cry of the many southern vigilante bodies which disgrace our section. The Ku Klux Klan, the White Camellias, the fascist-minded Silver Shirts, not only disseminate race antagonism, but lately have used this sentiment in the performance of a threatening rôle against labour: by intimidation and vicious propaganda they have sought to stop the growth of legitimate labour organisation, especially under the CIO. All these influences leave their mark.

Many are deceived by this kind of appeal who are entirely blameless. If some white workers, and farming people in remote rural districts, and disadvantaged middle-class people, are moved by such appeals, is it any wonder? Of course it is directly contrary to their interests to be taken in by them, but all too many are as yet in no position to learn that. Many of these folk have never had so much as an inkling of education designed to allay their fears, or to counteract the work of vicious agencies and men.

Perhaps southern people tend to be too acutely conscious of all this, and to forget the significant changes that have been begun in the way of education. For years organisations of one kind or another have sought to spread a different spirit. They have persuaded sections of the southern press to take a stand against the kind of yellow journalism that arouses racial prejudice; they have built up interracial understanding through common action; they have fostered public sentiment to frown upon

open appeals to race feeling. We have seen trade unions and farm associations where coloured and white workers have learned to work together, doing much to immunise their members against the poison of race antagonism.

There are those who while acknowledging these improvements still remain dubious. Even so, they are apt to say, it is very necessary to eliminate if possible the issue of "white supremacy" from the struggle for poll tax repeal.

There are also white Southerners who hold that we have no alternative but to work for Negro suffrage. They say we are not eliminating the "white supremacy" issue when we sidestep it. Instead we are giving ground to those who depend upon keeping alive this spurious issue for their own ulterior ends. With that I wholly agree. What we are dealing with is not a rational fact but an emotional fear. The way to eliminate it in the final count is to give Negroes the suffrage. That will furnish the most convincing proof of how trumped up is this kind of issue. Meantime, the course we should follow seems to me a plain one. Soberly, in unmistakable terms, the southern enfranchisement movement should everywhere place itself on record for the right of the Negro to vote. Those sections that have not yet done so should make their position clear. It should become a matter taken for granted that forward-looking Southerners stand for enfranchisement without regard to race or colour. The way would then be opened for the movement to become a joint movement, participated in by all. It would be immeasurably strengthened thereby.

Let me add, it would not be pure philanthropy on the part of white Southerners to stand for Negro suffrage. Our welfare as well as that of the Negro dictates this course. On this question progressive political forces should take a lesson from the experience of the trade unions, as they have learned at their peril that they dare not be divided along racial lines.

Besides the campaign to abolish a voters' poll tax in the states, two important new events have occurred. Arguing that states

have not the power to tax a federal function, suit has been brought by a Tennessee voter who, not paying his poll tax for 1939, was unable to vote in a special election to Congress of that year. When last reported the case was before the U. S. Circuit Court of Appeals. Also a bill has been introduced into Congress by Rep. Lee E. Geyer (Democrat of California) which would prohibit the states from making poll taxes a requirement for voting for federal office. Pushing this bill was the Civil Rights Committee of the Southern Conference for Human Welfare.

Poll tax repeal might well be the first battle fought, even though it would only partially enfranchise. It is the part of wisdom to concentrate on one task at a time.

To secure abolition of the poll tax laws and hence enfranchisement of large numbers of the poorer classes who are now disfranchised would be a signal victory for progressive people in the South. President Roosevelt's endorsement of poll tax repeal added to the chances of success.

The movement in its make-up and objectives has the potentialities for becoming an all-round progressive coalition. Let me not seem to exaggerate its possible effects. In itself it can hold no guarantee of great changes, even though all the potentialities are there. But even if there were a certainty that we should see little immediate change in the complexion of southern politics after the repeal of poll tax laws, I should still say that to repeal them is one of the most urgent next steps. As it is, we are like a man trying to fight with one hand tied behind his back, so long as so many of our southern people are disfranchised.

CHAPTER XI. TIME OF PROGRESS

The Progressive South

Denial of suffrage rights is a chief popular grievance in the South. It is one of many. We have seen in foregoing chapters how the status quo is being challenged in other ways. Diverse groups have come to swell the movement for abolition of wage differentials and for a living wage; for agrarian reform, especially to help the depressed sharecropper; for the right of labour to organise; for larger civil and economic liberty for the Negro.

Organised labour, always active in the attempts to bring about changes, became a real force during the decade of the 1930's. Fifteen years ago trade unions were still weak and ineffective. The thirties saw them grow greatly in numbers, and also in vigour and militance. They showed a capacity for learning important lessons when New Deal labour measures were threatened and they were called upon to struggle in order to hold on to their gains. To some extent they learned the close connexion between economic security and politics. Witness their campaign to secure passage of the Fair Labor Standards Act; also—in some cases successful—their efforts to elect progressive candidates to public office; and again, their rising demand for an end to disfranchisement of labour votes.

In a different category, but also indicative of progressive trends, are organisations such as the Southern Policy Committee. The Committee was established several years ago, bringing together liberal Southerners from all walks of life who are specialists in their fields. At its meeting in Atlanta in January, 1939, were present some 40 leaders of education, business, journalism,

labour and state governments. The five-point program emerging from this meeting took as its starting point the National Emergency Council report on the South. The Committee said the South asked for "equality of opportunity within the Union." To that end there should be extension of the federal government's tenancy program; the implementing of the President's National Health Conference program for federal government co-operation with states and counties in extending medical aid; appropriation of federal funds for equalisation of educational opportunities in all states. The Committee endorsed federal legislation and administration guaranteeing the rights of labour, including adequate wage standards and collective bargaining; it condemned freight rate differentials and urged legislation to deal with them; it urged abolition of the poll tax.¹

We should count as one of the most encouraging signs of change the greatly increased participation of the Negro in public life. Negroes have long had nationwide organisations with specific functions, such as the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People and the National Urban League. Their women's clubs, fraternal orders, church groups and so on, have worked for civic reforms. Lately Negro organisations and individuals have begun to deal with their problems in concerted fashion. The National Negro Congress, organised in 1936, represents some three million Negroes. Its program deals with every problem confronting the coloured citizen to-day. National though it is in scope, this Congress naturally takes a primary interest in the South where the vast majority of Negroes live. Together with this larger body is the potentially important Southern Negro Youth Congress.

Side-by-side with the developing organisations within the ranks of the Negro people have run years of interracial effort, as we have noted. In trade unions and other working-class groups, among middle-class Southerners, between white and coloured youth, wider common action has been growing. Progressive

white Southerners have for some years welcomed and encouraged the participation of the Negro.

The Southern Conference for Human Welfare, initiated in the summer of 1938, marked a new stage in the development of southern progressive activities. In it we see a tendency for liberal middle-class opinion to seek organised channels in company with labour. The first Congress was held in Birmingham in November, 1938, with more than 1,200 delegates present from all 13 of the southern states and from every type and kind of group. Labour unions were there—AFL, CIO, railroad brotherhoods, Workers Alliance; also social agencies, college student organisations, women's clubs, churches, university and public school teachers, ministers. There were prominent publicists and holders of public office, including Senators, Congressmen and judges.

It was an interracial gathering. Taking part in its deliberations were Negro delegates from locals of unions such as the United Mine Workers of America and the Steel Workers Organising Committee; from various interracial groups; from the NAACP, the Urban League, the National Negro Congress and the Southern Negro Youth Congress, besides those from coloured churches, colleges, civic and other community organisations. Two of the 15 vice-chairmen of the Southern Conference were Negroes, and Negro members were named to the Council of 120.

The list of officers showed the conference to be extraordinarily representative. A Thomas Jefferson Award was established by the Southern Conference to be given annually to the Southerner "who has done most to promote human and social welfare in line with the philosophy of Thomas Jefferson." The first recipient of the award was Supreme Court Justice Hugo Black who appeared in person to receive it. President Roosevelt sent a message and Mrs. Roosevelt made an address.

The Southern Conference was launched at a very propitious time. The report of the National Emergency Council on the

economic condition of the South had just placed the South's problems before the nation. On August 11, 1938, the day after publication of that significant report, President Roosevelt, speaking at Barnesville, Ga., had called upon the southern people to do something about the conditions depicted there. Throughout the conference the report was vividly present in the minds and speeches of the delegates and it shows plainly in the framing of their final resolutions. In effect the 1938 Southern Conference program implemented the National Emergency Council's report.*

The conference declared it would work for the end of differential wage and freight rates. It offered a program to protect and improve the conditions of the tenant farmer. It proposed to work for income tax laws in place of sales tax laws in the several states.

On race relations it urged "the positive extension of the franchise to all citizens of proper educational qualifications in primaries and general elections," it urged abolition of voter's poll tax laws, it endorsed and supported federal and state anti-lynching legislation, it opposed the practice of wage differentials between racial groups.

The conference opposed any amendments to the National Labor Relations Act and called for state labour relations acts. It went on record for continuation of the Senate civil liberties committee, opposed wage differentials on WPA projects, and supported the federal social security program. It condemned the "procedure employed by the Dies Committee" and also "its obvious use of Congressional investigatory power to discredit the present Administration." It endorsed President Roosevelt's efforts to promote unity of the labour movement.

The program approved a plan of federal aid to education

* The Southern Conference for Human Welfare held a second successful Congress in Chattanooga, Tenn., in April, 1940. Great stress in its program was placed upon the campaign for abolition of the voters' poll tax.

and urged other steps to improve southern schools. It urged upon the federal government a program of housing that would meet the acute needs of the South; beyond that it called upon southern Congressmen to introduce such legislation. It set forth a program of prison reform. It urged ratification of the federal Child Labor Amendment and outlined a program to deal with the problems of southern youth. Specifically and in general the conference took its stand for the extension of civil rights.

The conference provided for state conferences patterned after its own and also for periodic Southwide meetings. In its own words, the aim of the new movement was "to secure unity of action and maximum co-operation of all Southern progressives, individuals and groups, from church and school, from all labour, farm, industrial, fraternal and civic organisations, regardless of race, creed or colour, who support or are in sympathy with the aims and program of action adopted at the Southern Conference for Human Welfare."²

Progressives and Politics

Progressive groups have yet to take the next logical step of becoming an active force in southern politics. For a time even that seemed possible, with the New Deal the instrument for bringing it about.

Certainly the New Deal had an unusual opportunity. Faulty though its program was, politically it was liberal in its trend. It came into power at a time when an acute economic crisis demanded a program of reform and it had the courage to advance a progressive program. Not an adequate program, not an all-round program, not one that would solve our problems, but at least one that showed a concern for the needs of the mass of the people, that on the whole demonstrated a respect for civil liberties.

In taking its stand upon this liberal program the New Deal

found that there was gathering against it the nation's most powerful force, the moneyed interests; that gravitating around this force were all the groups in the country who seek maintenance of the status quo—even at the expense of popular welfare. At the same time the labouring people of the country, and with them large groups of progressive-minded people in the middle classes, began to realise how much was at stake. They began to mass behind the New Deal and also to propel it in the direction of greater progress. All progressive groups in America, feeling the danger confronting the people, lined up on the New Deal side.

Just as in the nation at large the issue began to be one of pro-New Deal and anti-New Deal, or in other words, progressive policies as opposed to reactionary policies, so it was in the South. This situation held great practical potentialities for the political rejuvenation of Dixie. The New Deal was after all the Democratic Party. The party might be split wide open down South, but both sides were still Democrats. The New Dealers as well as the anti-New Dealers would have access to the Democratic primary. For southern progressives this spelled the difference between having a channel for political reform and not having one. The exclusive control that the Democratic Party has over the use of the franchise is almost incomprehensible to any but a Southerner. This has become more true year by year since the disfranchising laws were passed. In most localities not to run for an office in the Democratic primary is just like not running at all. A few votes can be won and some excellent educational work can always be done by independent candidates, but these things do not suffice if popular forces really seek to challenge the rule of the political groups in office.

The situation seemed only to require bold, clear-sighted leadership on the part of the New Deal for southern progressive groups to become organised into a cohesive, liberalising force. It presupposed, of course, that popular forces in the rest of the nation should become welded into a solid New Deal front,

not the loose amalgam they had been up to that time. A southern progressive wing would have to be supported by a nationwide movement in order to make much headway. The time may not have been ripe; but in late 1938 it seemed a possibility.

Then there seemed to come a halt to vigorous New Deal attempts to bolster southern progressive trends. To all appearances the year 1938 saw the peak, at least for the time.

Let us suppose the worst were to happen, and the popular forces in the nation suffer defeat in the present period. It might come by abandonment of the New Deal program by the Democratic Party and the substitution of some spurious program designed to mislead. Or it might come by the victory of an outright anti-popular coalition—whether Democratic or Republican in name matters little. What then would we face in the ensuing years?

Consider what the South would stand to lose. Material benefits which the New Deal brought to labouring and farming people might be thrown into the discard. That would be a main objective of an administration and Congress antagonistic to such reforms. The trend in America toward federal concern for human welfare is a new trend. Its first big impetus came from the New Deal. In contrast to it, the contention of business groups and a business-minded government has always been that the welfare of the mass of people is a "local problem." That is the philosophy on which an anti-popular government would most certainly operate. It might not dare in one sweep to try to turn the clock back. But legislation that in the first place was only moderately adequate, the opposition would—indeed has already tried to—amend out of all recognition. Perhaps the titles of some acts would be left. The main content would be sure to go.

In all this the South would be the chief sufferer. With our lagging standards we stood to gain more than other regions from the federal measures of the New Deal. So our people

would stand to lose most if those federal measures were weakened or nullified and if others that are needed could not be enacted. The movement to throw off old-guard political domination would be greatly retarded, perhaps for the time being, blocked.

The reaction against popular gains might not stop there. In returning to control anti-popular interests would not be content, if they could help it, with allowing as much democratic liberty as the people have had in recent years. They could put a halter on majority action in only one effective way, by curtailing civil rights.

It should be apparent that the southern people, already suffering serious limitations in their exercise of democratic privileges, less well organised to resist further encroachment, would be the first to be subjected to further depredations. Can any one, knowing our history, say that anti-unionism, vigilante action, intimidation at the polls, race discrimination, are alien to the South? The peculiar southern social-economic pattern furnishes all too favourable a setting, and if southern anti-popular groups should resort to more concerted organisation, to closer relations with northern reaction, to more restraints on democracy? Then we should be seeing something menacingly akin to fascism. And that would be so no matter under what guise or designation the movement grew.

Of course the assault upon living standards and civil liberty would not be limited to the South. I suggest the likelihood of its spreading there, and perhaps having its biggest successes there. But it could not be confined there, no matter how vigorous an effort was made by the stronger labour and liberal groups in the North. A first step of tories in government would be the repeal or emasculation of present legislation protecting the right of labour to organise. The attempt is already being pressed. All labour in the nation would immediately be made more insecure. Needless to say, this would be only the opening big gun announcing a large-scale offensive.

It is tragic to contemplate so great a setback to popular welfare, the more so because we can see from recent years how great is the need, and how great would be the benefits, if New Deal reforms of the 1930's were continued and expanded.

The South will not easily lose all its gains. New Deal measures gave fresh impetus to progressive trends. The protection of labour's rights; the relief of unemployed in town and country which to some extent alleviated suffering; federal measures for social security; a federal wages and hours law; aid to the South in the conservation of its natural resources, especially its greatest and most abused resource, the land; such measures up to 1940 had already brought good results. They were object lessons that hundreds of thousands of southern people in all walks of life saw and grasped.

Southerners in large numbers know now that only under a federal administration devoted to civil liberty, firm in upholding the right of collective bargaining, insistent upon the duty of democratic government to strive to abolish destitution and raise the standard of living, is it possible for the South to forge ahead. For a decade the South has been moving toward the threshold of great progress. If these essentials of sound public policy are circumvented or, worse, flouted, the door of progress will have been slammed in the South's face.

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	IN THE SOUTH	SOUTH'S PERCENT OF TOTAL FOR UNITED STATES
Active spindles	18,238,000	68
Value of products, cotton manufacture	\$595,868,000	70
Active looms	340,000	60
Cotton consumed, bales ..	4,344,000	81

(Value of product data are for 1933. Source: *Blue Book of Southern Progress*, published by *Manufacturers Record*, 1936, pp. 68, 70).

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36. See Webb, W. P., *Divided We Stand*, Chapter II, for accounts of the vast concentration of the nation's wealth in northern hands.

CHAPTER II

1. Much has been written lately on conditions of southern sharecroppers. See especially Johnson *et al*, *The Collapse of Cotton Tenancy*; Works Progress Administration, Division of Social Research, *Landlord and Tenant on the Cotton Plantation*, especially pp. 100 ff., for living conditions; Caldwell, E., and Bourke-White, M., *You Have Seen Their Faces*.
2. *Baltimore Sun*, March 29, 1936.
3. See Allen, J. S., *Reconstruction*, 1937; also DuBois, W. E. B., *Black Reconstruction*, 1935.
4. Johnson, C. S., Embree, E. R., Alexander, W. W., *The Collapse of Cotton Tenancy*, 1935, pp. 31-32.
5. For two accounts of the credit system, see Johnson *et al*, *Collapse of Cotton Tenancy*, Ch. II, "A Precarious Credit System," and James

- S. Allen, *The Negro Question in the United States*, 1936, Ch. V, "Financing the Plantation."
6. Wilson, Walter, *Forced Labor in the United States*, 1933, pp. 95 ff. On the development and terms of the laws, see *International Juridical Bulletin*, Jan., 1937.
7. Hart, A. B., *The Southern South*, 1910, p. 283.
8. Johnson, Embree and Alexander, *op. cit.*, pp. 11-12.
9. Quoted by Wilson, *op. cit.*, p. 85.
10. Skaggs, William H., *The Southern Oligarchy*, 1924, pp. 277-278.
11. *New York Times*, Nov. 26 and 28, 1936.
12. Report on *Economic Conditions of the South*.
13. *Farm Tenancy*, pp. 17-18.
14. Report on *Economic Conditions of the South*, Sec. II, "Ownership and Use of Land."
15. Lewinson, P., *Race, Class and Party*, 1932, Chs. III-V; also Allen, J. S., *Reconstruction*, Chs. IV-VII.
16. See U. S. Bureau of the Census, *Census of Agriculture*, 1935, I, Part 2, County Table I by states.
17. U. S. Bureau of the Census, *Farm Tenancy in the United States*, *Census Monograph LV*, 1920, Table 2, p. 23.
18. U. S. Bureau of the Census, *General Report*, *Census of Agriculture*, 1935, III, Table 2, p. 106. In 1935 there were 1,831,475 tenant farmers in the South, or 53.5% of all farm operators. Of them, 1,202,174 were white and 629,301 were coloured. The figure of 68% coloured sharecroppers and share tenants is for 1930.
19. Johnson, Embree and Alexander, *op. cit.*, Table I, p. 73. The figure cited is for the 10 principal cotton growing states.
20. Vance, R. P., *Human Geography of the South*, p. 190; also Johnson, Embree and Alexander, *op. cit.*, pp. 71-77.
21. *Farm Tenancy*, pp. 43-44.
22. Lumpkin, K. D., and Douglas, D. W., *Child Workers in America*, 1937, Chap. VI, "The Forgotten Child," pp. 82-104.
23. According to the 1930 Census of Occupations, there were some 1,100,000 farm wage labourers in the 13 southern states. About 491,000 of these were coloured.
24. See Allen, J. S., *The Negro Question*, Chap. IV, pp. 87-93; also report on *Mechanical Cotton Picker*, by R. L. Horne and E. G. McKibben, National Research Project, WPA, Report No. A-2, 1937.
25. *Monthly Labor Review*, March, 1938, by Paul S. Taylor, "Power Farming and Labor Displacement in the Cotton Belt, 1937," pp. 595-607.
26. *Ibid.*
27. Robt. K. Straus, *Harper's Magazine*, *op. cit.*
28. *Ibid.*

CHAPTER III

1. See for data: U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Bulletin No. 604, *History of Wages in the United States*, Supplement, 1929-1933, pp. 523 ff.; National Industrial Conference Board, *Conference Board Service Letter*, Jan. 27, 1938; U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Labor Information Bulletin*, Nov., 1937, "Earnings of Bituminous Coal Workers 1929-1936," pp. 12-13.
2. Heer, Clarence, *Income and Wages in the South*, 1930, pp. 24, 30.
3. See U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Bulletin No. 604, *op. cit.*, pp. 387-388 and 391-393; also Mitchell, Broadus, *The Rise of Cotton Mills in the South*, 1921, pp. 224 ff. In 1881 the average wage of weavers (male) in South Carolina cotton mills was 81¢ per day; in Massachusetts the average was \$1.13 per day. In 1881 spinners (female) earned on the average in Georgia 47¢ per day; in Massachusetts, 98¢. These figures are fairly typical of the general level of wages paid at that period, North and South.
4. Vance, R. P., *Human Geography*, pp. 504 ff. In the rest of the country from 1900 to 1920 the urban population increased by only 72%.
5. Johnson, Charles S., *The Negro in American Civilization*, 1930, pp. 58-59. See also Reid, Ira, *Negro Membership in American Labor Unions*, 1930, p. 17.
6. *Ibid.*
7. Johnson, *op. cit.*, pp. 59-60; Cayton, Horace R., and Mitchell, George S., *Black Workers and The New Unions*, 1939, pp. 283, 292 ff.
8. U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Labor Information Bulletin*, April, 1937, "Negro Labor in the Iron and Steel Industry," p. 7.
9. See U. S. Women's Bureau, especially Bulletins 10, 22, 26, 29, 32, 34, 48 and 56, on women in industry in several southern states.
10. Data compiled from U. S., 15th Census, 1930, *Occupation Statistics*, Reprints by States, for the southern states, Tables 4 and 11; also U. S. Census Bureau, *A Social-Economic Grouping of the Gainful Workers of the United States*, 1930. Washington, 1938, Tables 18 and 19, pp. 46 ff., and Tables 24 and 25, pp. 58 ff.
11. U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Bulletin No. 616, *Handbook of Labor Statistics*, 1936 ed., pp. 576-577.
12. U. S. Industrial Commission, *Report*, VII, 1901, pp. 766, 782.
13. *Ibid.*, pp. 790, 791.
14. Lumpkin and Douglas, *op. cit.*, p. 46.
15. Lumpkin and Douglas, *op. cit.*, pp. 196-217.
16. Unless otherwise stated data on child labour compiled from U. S. Census, Occupational Statistics by States, *Children in Gainful Occupations*, 1930.

17. U. S. Women's Bureau, *Women in the United States*, Mary Elizabeth Pigeon, 1937, pp. 55, 57, for data on differentials.
18. Data compiled from Federal Emergency Relief Administration, *Monthly Reports*, Sept., 1933; Aug., 1934; Feb., 1935; May, 1935. In early 1935 the Works Progress Administration replaced the FERA.
19. *Washington Tribune*, Nov. 10, 1936; also *Journal of Negro Education*, V, January, 1936, John P. Davis, "A Survey of the Problems of the Negro Under the New Deal," pp. 3-12.
20. Report on *Economic Conditions of the South*.
21. *New Orleans Item*, Dec. 2, 1935; *Birmingham News*, March 10, 1936.
22. *Federated Press*, Oct. 25, 1935.
23. *Ibid.*, Nov. 5, 1935.
24. Dunn, Robt. W., and Hardy, Jack, *Labor and Textiles*, 1931, p. 113.
25. "Wage Differentials, City versus Small Towns and North versus South." Typewritten manuscript in files of Labor Research Association.
26. WPA, Research Monograph XII, Margaret L. Stecker, *Intercity Differences in Costs of Living, March 1935, 59 Cities*, 1937, Table I, p. xv, Table 4, p. 5.
27. *Ibid.*, pp. 7-8, 16.
28. *New York Times*, June 14, 1938. (Italics supplied.)
29. National Recovery Administration, *The Economic and Social Implications of the Company Store and Scrip System*, Report made Pursuant to art. IX, sec. 4, of the Code of Fair Competition for the Retail Trade, 1934.
30. Quoted in "Wage Differentials, City versus Small Towns and North versus South," *op. cit.*
31. *Ibid.*; also *New York Times*, June 4, 1939, report of survey by U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, which found living costs at most 3.1% lower in a group of selected southern cities than in northern. Rents in the cities surveyed were only 7.6% lower in the South.
32. "Wage and Hour Differentials," Supplement to *Conference Board Service Letter*, Vol. XI, No. 1, Jan. 27, 1938, National Industrial Conference Board.
33. *Manufacturers Record*, Oct., 1936.
34. "The Southern Freight Differential," *The New South*, March, 1938.

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2. *Monthly Labor Review*, Nov., 1937, Table 2, p. 1086.
3. U. S. Agricultural Adjustment Administration, *Consumers Guide*, Feb. 14, 1938, "More About Rents," p. 12.
4. *Monthly Labor Review*, June, 1937, "Annual Earnings of Employees in the Iron and Steel Industry, 1934," Table 2, p. 1530.
5. Report on *Economic Conditions of the South*, Sec. 5, "Private and Public Income."
6. U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Bulletin No. 604, *History of Wages in the United States*, pp. 537 ff. On Jan. 1, 1937, farm wage rates in the South with board averaged between \$15 and \$16 a month; without board, between \$22 and \$24. (*Monthly Labor Review*, March, 1938, p. 755.)
7. U. S. Children's Bureau, Bulletin 134, *The Welfare of Children in Cotton Growing Areas of Texas*, 1924, p. 42.
8. *Monthly Labor Review*, June, 1936, p. 1493.
9. *Annals of the American Academy*, Jan., 1931, E. L. Otey, "Women and Children in Southern Industry," pp. 164-165.
10. *Monthly Labor Review*, June, 1936, p. 1492.
11. Lowell, Esther, Unpublished material, 1929.
12. Johnson, Embree and Alexander, *op. cit.*, p. 18.
13. Vance, *Human Geography*, p. 424.
14. See *Annals of the American Academy*, *op. cit.*, pp. 163 ff.; also *American Federationist*, Sept., 1931, "Southern Mill Villages," pp. 1086 ff.
15. *Monthly Labor Review*, March, 1938, p. 669, reports on a new National Health Survey, made in 1935-36, for which only preliminary reports are as yet available, confirming the findings of previous studies on ill-health among the poor.
16. U. S. Children's Bureau, Bulletin No. 119, *Infant Mortality in Baltimore*, Anna Rochester, 1923, p. 178; and *Causal Factors in Infant Mortality*, Robert M. Woodbury, Pub. 142, 1925.
17. Nine southern states showed rates between 62 and 79 deaths per 1,000 live births; Arkansas had a rate of 112. Only seven states outside the South had rates as high as 60. See U. S. Children's Bureau, *The Child*, March-April, 1937, Table IM-1, Trend of Infant Mortality by States, 1915-35, p. 16.
18. *American Journal of Public Health*, May, 1933, John A. Ferrell, "Health Problems Peculiar to the Southern States," Table I, group 3, p. 443.
19. *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, X, "Maternity Welfare," Table I, p. 222. Ten out of the 19 states in the United States with maternal mortality rates of over 60 were southern. South Carolina

- had a rate of 95. See *The Child, op. cit.*, Table MM-1, Trend in Maternal Mortality by States, 1915-35, p. 17.
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 21. Report on *Economic Conditions of the South*, Sec. 7, "Health."
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 27. Davidson, Elizabeth H., *Child Labor Legislation in the Southern Textile States*, 1939.
 28. White House Conference Report, *op. cit.*, Part IV; also U. S. Children's Bureau, Publication No. 197, *Child Labor—Facts and Figures*, 1933, Chapter III.
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 31. U. S. Women's Bureau, Bulletin No. 144, *State Labour Laws for Women* (Revision of Bulletin No. 98), 1937, p. 3.
 32. Pipkin, Charles W., "Social Legislation in the South," Southern Policy Papers, No. 3, 1936, p. 24.
 33. U. S. Senate, Committee on Manufactures, 71st Congress, 1st session, *Hearings on S. Res. 49*, May 8, 9, 20, 1929, pp. 28-30.
 34. *Monthly Labor Review*, Feb., 1938, p. 462; Oct., 1938, pp. 807 ff.
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 36. *Ibid.*, p. 16.
 37. *Ibid.*, pp. 5 ff. Alabama's compensation law was amended recently to provide double compensation for children illegally employed. This is a very important addition to compensation acts, for it serves to deter employers from putting children to work at dangerous tasks.

38. Labor Research Association, *NRA Notes*, April, 1934, quoted from *Daily News Record*, March 20, 1934.
39. U. S. Senate, Committee on Manufactures, *Report to accompany S. Res. 49, 1929*, p. 6.
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48. U. S. Bureau of the Census, *Negroes in the United States, 1920-1932*, p. 229.
49. Report on *Economic Conditions of the South*.

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2. *Ibid.*, Table 51, p. 70.
3. Burns, Robert E., *I Am a Fugitive from a Georgia Chain Gang!* 1932; Spivak, John L., *Georgia Nigger*, 1932; Myra Page, "Men in Chains," *The Nation*, Nov. 3, 1935; Wilson, *op. cit.*
4. Wilson, Walter, "Twilight of the Chain Gang," *The Nation*, Jan. 13, 1940.
5. *Montgomery (Alabama) Advertiser*, Nov. 9, 1933. See also, William Skaggs, *The Southern Oligarchy*, pp. 243-244; *Hattiesburg (Mississippi) American*, April 18, 1929.
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11. *World Almanac*, 1938.
12. *Richmond (Va.) Times Dispatch*; *Danville (Va.) Register*; *Louisville (Ky.) Courier-Journal*; *Columbia (S. C.) State*; *Birmingham (Ala.) Age-Herald*; *Oklahoma City (Okla.) News*; *High Point (N. C.) Enterprise*; and others.
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22. *Birmingham Post*, Nov. 12, 1936.
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29. Commons, John R., *History of Labor in the United States*, IV, Perlman, S., and Taft, P., *Labor Movements*, 1935, p. 609; *Southern Worker*, Sept., 1934; Labor Research Association, *Steel & Metal Notes*, Oct., 1935; McCracken, Duane, *Strike Injunctions in the New South*, 1931.
30. See *New York Times*, Sept. 4-28, 1934; also *Can Guns Settle Strikes?*, Fellowship of Reconciliation pamphlet, 1935.
31. Perlman and Taft, *op. cit.*, pp. 607-608.
32. Mitchell, George, *op. cit.*, pp. 80-81.
33. Labor Research Association, *Mining Notes*, May, 1934, June, 1934, Nov., 1935; *ibid.*, *Textile Notes*, July, 1934, May, 1935; *Federated Press*, Aug. 13, 1934; *New York Times*, Sept. 3, 1935; *New Masses*, Oct. 29, 1935.
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36. Perlman and Taft, *op. cit.*, p. 605; *Nation*, Aug. 29, 1934, A. Kirkland, "Alabama Goes on Strike," pp. 233-234; American Civil Liberties Union, *News Release*, Dec. 4, 1936; *New Orleans Tribune*, April 25, 1936; *Federated Press*, May 15, 1936.
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38. Mitchell, George, *op. cit.*, pp. 61-62; Dunn and Hardy, *op. cit.*, pp. 188, 231; Perlman and Taft, *op. cit.*, pp. 606, 609; *United Mine Workers Journal*, April 15, 1936; Cayton and Mitchell, *op. cit.*, p. 325.
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41. *New York Times*, Sept. 19, 1937.
42. *Daily News Record*, Feb. 24, 1939.
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3. Mitchell, *op. cit.*, pp. 32-33.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 33-54.

5. The account given is compiled chiefly from contemporary reports in the *New York Times*.
6. Totals compiled from data by states in *Monthly Labor Review*, June, 1933, p. 1297; July, 1934, p. 71 f.; May, 1936, p. 1303; May, 1937, p. 1226. Figures for 1934 are estimated by the author based on press reports, since government data give only an "interstate" total for general textile strike.
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13. Labor Research Association, *Mining Notes*, April, 1934.
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17. *Ibid.*, Dec., 1931, p. 145.
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19. *New Orleans Tribune*, March 27, 1936; Jan. 10, 1936.
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24. *Ibid.*, pp. 125-27.
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2. Cayton and Mitchell, *op. cit.*, p. 201.
3. From unpublished material belonging to Myra Page. The author is indebted to Miss Page for other first-hand materials in this chapter.
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5. Spero and Harris, *op. cit.*, pp. 366-369; 360-362.
6. Mitchell, George S., "The Negro in Southern Trade Unionism," *Southern Economic Journal*, Jan., 1936.
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8. Spero and Harris, *op. cit.*, pp. 295-299.
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14. Johnson, *op. cit.*, p. 107.
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16. Cf. Johnson, *op. cit.*, pp. 107 ff.; *Negro Membership in American Labor Unions*, pp. 33 ff.; also Labor Research Association, *Railroads in Crisis*, 1939, p. 31.
17. *Negro Membership in American Trade Unions*, pp. 75 ff.
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21. Mitchell, George, *op. cit.*, p. 64.
22. Brooks, Robt. R. R., *When Labor Organizes*, 1937, pp. 35-63.
23. *New Republic*, Oct. 27, 1937, Mary Heaton Vorse, "Bringing Unions to Textiles."
24. *Hosiery Worker*, June 2, 1939.
25. *Union News Service*, June 24, 1937.
26. *Blue Book of Southern Progress*, 1936, p. 7.
27. *New York Times*, April 5, 9, 10, 1937.
28. *Times Dispatch* (Richmond, Va.), April 14, 1937; *Advance*, May, 1937; *Federated Press*, April 1, July 5, 1937; *Union News Service*, Aug. 23, Oct. 11, 1937.
29. For the rise of the CIO see the pamphlet published by the CIO, *CIO: What It Is and How It Came to Be*. For longer accounts, J. Raymond Walsh, *The CIO*, 1937; Mary Heaton Vorse, *Labor's New Millions*, 1938; Labor Research Association, *Labor Fact Book IV*.

30. Brooks, Robt. R. R., *When Labor Organizes*, Appendix for figures.
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CHAPTER VIII

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2. Percentages computed from U. S. *Census of Manufactures*, data for southern states.
3. U. S. Bureau of the Census, *Special Report, Relief Expenditures by Government and Private Organizations, 1929 and 1931, 1932*. Table 2, pp. 15 ff.; also Table 1, pp. 8 ff.
4. *Farm Tenancy*, Report of the President's Committee, Feb., 1937, pp. 5-6, 16, 68.
5. Richards, H. I., *Cotton and the AAA, 1936*, Chapter X.
6. *Ibid.*, pp. 234, 290; Johnson, Embree and Alexander, *op. cit.*, p. 49.
7. For brief accounts discussing the AAA, its cotton program and its effects, the reader should turn to Johnson, Embree and Alexander, *op. cit.*, Chapter IV, "The Cotton Tenant Under the Depression and Recovery Programs," and Allen, *The Negro Question in the United States*, pp. 104 ff.
8. Johnson, Embree and Alexander, *op. cit.*, pp. 50, 51.
9. *Landlord and Tenant on the Cotton Plantation*, *op. cit.*, p. 67.
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11. Johnson, Embree and Alexander, *op. cit.*, pp. 51-52.
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13. *New York Times*, Dec. 14, 1935.
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16. Richards, *op. cit.*, p. 55.
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